

# The Growth Of A Legend

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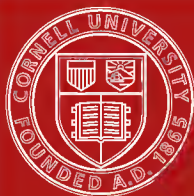
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# **The Growth of a Legend**

**A Study**

**Based upon the German Accounts  
Of Franks-Tireurs and "Atrocities"  
In Belgium**

**By**

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PREFACE BY J. MARK BALDWIN, PH.D.,  
D.Sc., LL.D.

THIS book, written by a Belgian scientific man associated before the war with the well-known Solvay Institute for sociological study at Brussels, is fitted to render service in the English language for two reasons.

In the first place, it presents a topic which is of intrinsic interest, not only in its bearings upon the question of the Belgian *francs-tireurs* legend, but also upon that of the origin, propagation, and value of such legends in general. In the second place, it is, as the author declares, not a polemic, but a piece of careful work based upon authentic German documents and conducted in accordance with the methods recognized as appropriate to sociological investigation.

I

It would not be in place to repeat the author's case; he speaks for himself. What I would

signalize is the absolute justice of his procedure in carrying out to its conclusion the work of the German society "Pax," an association which, fearing the influence among German Catholics of the stories told about the Belgian priests, investigated the stories and found them to be false and libellous. This German vindication of the Belgian clergy against official calumny—calumny propagated by the Kaiser himself in his telegram of September 8, 1914, to the President of the United States—is really a vindication of the Belgian people entire. It is no doubt in some sort just to the German people to look upon the case as one illustrating the growth of collective illusion and prejudgment, based on misinformation and false testimony. But this explanation does not in any sense excuse the principals—the military authorities, the editors of journals, the ambassadors and diplomats, the ruler himself—who accepted, confirmed, and made use of these exploded and mythical legends of Belgian depravity and crime, and continue to do so to-day.<sup>1</sup> The falsity of the German

<sup>1</sup> A brochure containing extracts from the German official indictment of the Belgian people was extensively circulated in

*White Book* of May, 1915, is here again exposed from the point of view of social psychology; it had already been refuted from the point of view of the value of evidence (see Professor J. Valéry, *Les Crimes de la Population belge*, Paris, Fontemoing et Cie, 1916; also F. Passelecq, *La Réponse du Gouvernement belge au Livre Blanc allemand du 10 Mai, 1915*, Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1916).

The German case is as pitiful as a defence as it is weak in its evidence. Suppose the Belgian populace, frenzied by anger and fear, had overstepped here and there the bounds of organized military action, in defending their homes; would this justify the crimes against cities, monuments, families, clergy, and individuals of which the "Bryce Report," for example, is full?<sup>1</sup> American soldiers were fired upon some months ago from windows in Vera Cruz; were they ordered to destroy that city in revenge and massacre

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English in the United States under the title of *The Belgian People in War, a Violation of International Law*.

<sup>1</sup> See also the amazing and crushing documents published in the book, *Belgium and Germany, texts and documents*, preceded by a foreword by Henri Davignon (Thomas Nelson and Sons, London and New York).

its inhabitants? The German colossus boasts of its power, and in the same breath declares that it acts in "self-defence" in shooting old men and women in villages from which all males under fifty are away on military service. This pretence is as shameful as the crime.

But even this pretence is now shown from the records of German writers and observers to be without foundation. Belgium entire has the right to the same revolt in horror and protest that her venerable prelate voiced in behalf of his brethren against these charges—a protest which a German society has shown to have been justified. Insult added to injury indeed!—this attempt to blacken the moral character of the victim, after having cut his throat and rifled his pockets.

Early in the course of the war, an American writer penned the following sentences, summing up the case in an opinion now only too fully confirmed (see editorial in the *Philadelphia North American*, Dec. 4, 1914):

"With characteristic efficiency, the German government and people have set out to de-

stroy the image of heroism and sacrifice that exists in the minds of men [concerning Belgium], and to substitute therefor an image of craft and dishonour. Germany is not yet through with crushed and bleeding Belgium. The flinging of bombs on sleeping homes, the levelling of cities, the exaction of vast tribute, the infliction of alien military rule, the driving of a million men and women into exile, the seizure of all food supplies from a destitute people—these things are not enough. Belgium's martyrdom must be mocked; she must be covered with reproach; she must be branded, in all her helplessness and despair, as a strumpet among the nations. . . . To a certain extent, the desperate nature of her [Germany's] expedient was mitigated by expressions of regret and pledges of reparation. But now these have been repudiated; and Germany is engaged in an organized campaign to defame the victim she has wronged. This is an offence far blacker than the invasion. Struck down under the plea of 'military necessity,' Belgium is to be robbed even of her good name. The very corpse of the murdered nation is to be dishonoured and mutilated."

## II

After reading such verdicts, rendered by impartial neutral authorities, the reader will be more than ever struck by the other characteristic of the author of this book, his singular self-control and judicial method, in treating the case. One would never know he was a Belgian—except perhaps from this very scrupulosity and the extreme fairness of his argument. He leaves the reader to draw the conclusion—which is happily so clear that “he who runs may read.” We may honour him the more for it, finding in it something of the spirit of the Belgian people and government alike, who, without show, as without hesitation, preferred their country’s martyrdom and their own ruin to a moment’s acquiescence in the proposal to sell their independence and betray their nation’s word. It is the more unusual, however, this reticence in the presence of injury, in the case of these baseless moral charges; for the facts of the invasion itself, and its diplomatic prelude, were open to the world and were placed before the neutral nations by unimpeachable written testimony.

In the case of these moral charges, however, the evidence is more vague and scattered, its vehicle is more logical and problematical, and its presentation, in dry literary form, runs the risk of appearing unimpressive and merely legal.

Accordingly, in writing this little Preface, I consider it my duty, as an observer and critic of a neutral country, to raise the curtain of the author's <sup>star</sup>reserve, and draw the conclusion of his study. This is done indeed in the citation made above. The legend of the Belgian *francs-tireurs*—old men engaged in terrorizing the hosts of the Kaiser in the thin moonlight of Flanders! fearful women passing as pale ghosts before the shrinking giants of the Imperial Guard! unformed girls waving ghastly flags of vengeance in the faces of the dauntless heroes of the Brandenburger regiments! babies crying in the windows with the intent to unnerve the valiant gunsmen of the Emperor's siege mortars! even the poor carrier pigeons bearing the brass numbers of an innocent sport, giving evidence of the complicity of entire villages in the crime of *leze-majestät*—these are the reasons given to the world and accepted by the Germans for the

destruction of Louvain, with its library and historical university, for the shelling for days of priceless architectural monuments, for the assassination of hundreds of men and women in a day in the market-places, for the murder, under official order, of priests, and the bombardment of hospitals and relief convoys—for all the fearful show of bloody crimes which make one faint to read and sick to think of.<sup>1</sup>

That any one but Germans can accept this “justification” is too much to believe. Certainly not Americans who have their own reasons for refusing to be gulled by stories whose tragic setting alone robbed them of their import of farce. It was not a German torpedo that sunk the *Tubantia*, but if it was German then the torpedo was not fired at this vessel but at some war-ship which passed that way! The *Sussex* was not torpedoed, but another vessel at the same time and place which—in the sketch of the commander—had *only* two fun-

<sup>1</sup> The evidence given in the publication, *Belgium and Germany*, cited above, illustrated by photographs of German and Belgian documents and scenes, fully justifies each of these statements.



nels! It was not German or Austrian submarines that did similar things in the Mediterranean, but Turkish; yet we cannot tell which U-boats were concerned for the Turks, it seems, have none! The *Settimbro* was fired upon, even the boats full of passengers, but the captain of the submarine thought he saw a uniform in one of these boats and this indicated, without doubt, a transport! So the merry round of silly tales renews itself. If the devil saves his face before a civilized world by such gauzelike veils as this, it is certainly the thinnest material that ever served so worthy a purpose.

While it is well then that M. van Langenhove has given to his book the character of a scientific study, conscientious and prudent, and has used methods and data suited to convince any who were still in doubt<sup>1</sup>; while too it is well that he has himself refrained from stating the conclusions which a legitimate inference cannot fail to draw; still there are many who will find it difficult to suppress their feeling of indignation.

<sup>1</sup> One may read an interesting résumé and appreciation of M. van Langenhove's book from the pen of M. F. Pas-selecq, in the French review *Le Correspondant*, Dec. 25, 1915.

There is a certain popular judicial sense abroad which often finds in the form of a criminal's plea of "not-guilty" adequate reasons for his conviction. Germany's acts of war are powerful enough; her reasons for many of them must be considered stupid in any court of enquiry which goes the length of admitting their sincerity, and takes the trouble, as the author of this book does, to submit them to serious examination.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THIS book is not a polemical work. It is a study undertaken in a purely scientific spirit. Determined, in spite of incessant and impassioned discussions, to eliminate personal feelings, I have tried to ignore my own nationality.

In collecting stories about *francs-tireurs*, in comparing these stories with the facts, in studying how they have originated, in trying to elucidate their genesis and distribution by the light of collective psychology, I have employed the methods familiar in times of peace. I hope to have served in this way not only my own country, which thirsts for the truth, but all those who are honestly endeavouring to understand and to form an accurate judgment upon the events described.

F. v. L.



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# The Growth of a Legend

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## CHAPTER I

### OBJECT, METHOD, AND SOURCES OF THE WORK

Legendary elaborations in time of war—Stories of popular fury in Belgium—Legendary characters—Documents from exclusively German sources—*Informations Pax* and enquiries by the military authorities—Their origin and their significance.

“WHEN war visits a country,” says an old German proverb, “lies become as numerous as grains of sand.”

*Kommt der Krieg ins Land  
Dann gibt's Lügen wie Sand.*

The war now in progress has not contradicted this popular observation. It has provoked the development of a large number of legendary stories.

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These are of a diverse nature. Some have elements of the marvellous, and tell of supernatural interventions. Such is the story told by the Protestant Prelate von Römer of Stuttgart as taken from a soldier's letter.

"We arrived at night at an advanced post. Darkness surrounded us threateningly. As we were few we felt some anxiety for we could not count upon human aid. We resolved to kneel down together and implore the help of the All-Powerful. Suddenly we saw an apparition holding a flaming sword which stood before us. When at dawn it disappeared, we discovered that we were only a few yards from the enemy and that we had been in this way miraculously saved."<sup>1</sup>

Other stories, which do not introduce the supernatural element, are nevertheless characterized by important legendary developments, arising from the circumstances of the war. Such is the case notably of those which relate manifestations of a veritable popular fury unchained in Belgium against the German invasion. These are perhaps the most numerous

<sup>1</sup> See *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, June 12, 1915.



and the most characteristic. They constitute a well-defined collection which lends itself to objective analysis. The present study is devoted to them.

Starting in the ranks of the German army these stories are propagated throughout the empire and have become there objects of belief. In the following pages it will nevertheless be shown that they possess the distinctive properties of legend.

I shall show in the first place that they are in direct conflict with historical fact. Arranging the stories according to the themes which they illustrate I shall show, for a certain proportion of them, the part which is true, and the part which is false. I shall study the genesis of them and bring to the light the sum of the conditions, derived from the psychology of the German soldiery, which have determined them and made them appear as a necessary phenomenon. I shall reconstitute, from some examples which have been closely observed, the mechanism of their elaboration. I shall try to trace their dissemination through oral, written, or pictorial channels. I shall indicate

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the persons concerned in that dissemination and the means they have employed—letters from the front, the press, books, works of the imagination, the theatre, and the pencil. I shall show by what authorities, of higher and higher rank, these stories have been successively approved; the sanction which has been given to them by royalty; and the fashion in which they have become rooted in popular belief. Finally, I shall disengage the central theme which dominates all and gives them the unity of a complete cycle.

In a matter exposed like this to the most lively controversies, on account also of the belief in the authority attaching to these legends in Germany, it is of importance not to advance any facts which cannot be supported by the evidence of an unimpeachable authority. I have therefore made it a rule, which rigorously limits the scope of the enquiry here undertaken, to draw my examples and documentary evidence exclusively from German sources.

These sources consist, in great part, of communications which have appeared in a section of the German press under the title *Informations*

*Pax* (*Pax-Informationen*). It is necessary to consider briefly their origin and significance.

There exist, in Germany, several Catholic organizations which have survived the epoch of *Kulturkampf*. They are devoted to the defence of the reputation of the clergy and of members of the "Centre" party. The association of priests known as *Pax*, of which the offices are in Cologne (Kuniberts Kloster, 16), is of this number.

The events of the war have supplied this organization ever since the beginning of hostilities with a new field of activity.

Hardly had the German armies entered Belgium when strange rumours began to circulate. They spread from place to place, they were reproduced by the press, and they soon permeated the whole of Germany. It was said that the Belgian people, instigated by the clergy, had intervened perfidiously in the hostilities; had attacked by surprise isolated detachments; had indicated to the enemy the positions occupied by the troops; that women, old men, and even children had been guilty of horrible atrocities upon wounded and defence-

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less German soldiers, tearing out their eyes and cutting off fingers, nose, or ears; that the priests from their pulpits had exhorted the people to commit these crimes, promising them as a reward the kingdom of heaven, and had even taken the lead in this barbarity.

Public credulity accepted these stories. The highest powers in the State welcomed them without hesitation and endorsed them with their authority. Even the Emperor echoed them, and, taking them for a text, advanced, in the famous telegram of September 8, 1914, addressed to the President of the United States, the most terrible accusations against the Belgian people and clergy.

In this way public opinion in Germany was disturbed and a lively indignation manifested itself, directed especially against the priests who were held responsible for the barbarities attributed to the Belgians. Each new story was welcomed with exclamations and violent commentaries. By a natural diversion the anger to which they were a prey was directed by the Germans against the Catholic clergy generally. Protestants allowed the old reli-

gious hatred to be relighted in their minds and delivered themselves to attacks against Catholics. A new *Kulturkampf* was let loose.

The Catholics did not delay in taking action against this hostile attitude.

In the early days of the war the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* had, like the rest of the press, reproduced without reserve the stories about the fury of the Belgian populace. On August 16th, with the appearance of No. 728, its attitude suddenly changed. It denounced violently, under the heading "Insolent and Unscrupulous Confessional Excitation," the anti-Catholic significance which certain organs attached to events in Belgium.

"One would not have believed it possible," said this paper, "but it is a fact that since the beginning of the war in which the German Empire finds itself, certain German journals have not hesitated to pursue a sectarian agitation as in the discreditable times of the *Kulturkampf*. If it were only the second-rate papers, about which it is useless to worry, it would be bad enough, but there is one which pretends to a certain consideration, the prin-

cial organ of an important party in a province of Prussia. It is, therefore, impossible to keep silent. One must give an example, in truth, an abominable example. While the entire German Empire offers a magnificent spectacle of concord, while all differences of party and creed disappear and the sole thought which animates all minds is the protection and security of the country, the *Hannoversche Courier*—such is the name of the unscrupulous journal—has the hardihood to write and print in its No. 31282, of August 13, 1914 (morning edition), the following article from its Belgian correspondent:

“‘The atrocities inflicted upon our wounded make Belgians of both sexes appear like beasts thirsting for blood. Where has one seen, except among barbarians of a remote epoch, the tearing out of the eyes or the traitorous butchering of the wounded? Such things were, indeed, only possible in the days of the Huns! And now we meet with the same thing in Christian Belgium with its ultramontane government and its seventy thousand priests! We have here, in a sense, a repetition of the eve of St. Bartholomew, and it is necessary to get to the bottom of the matter in order to extirpate such barbarity.’

"The *Hannoversche Courier* sees in the Belgian atrocities a manifestation of ultramontanism. It holds the 'ultramontane government' and the clergy responsible and appeals to the anti-Catholic proclivities of its circle of readers in order to start an agitation against Catholics."

Two days later (No. 732, August 18, 1914), the great Catholic organ returned to the question of the "insolence inspired by venomous religious hatred" of the *Hannoversche Courier* and its "jargon of *Kulturkampf*" (*Kulturkampfjargon*). From this time it has energetically devoted itself to the task of freeing the clergy from responsibility for the acts of hostility and cruelty attributed to the Belgian population. But it is particularly the function of an association such as *Pax* organized for this express purpose, to undertake the defence of the menaced religious interests of the German Catholics. Its directors understood at once that in order to check the evil it was necessary to cut away its roots. They undertook to investigate the accuracy of the innumerable stories attributing odious acts to members of

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the Belgian clergy. They proposed to discredit them and stop their diffusion by categorical denials.

This task was not without difficulty. Only those stories which by giving precise and circumstantial details, such as the place or time, name of the person, or number of the regiment concerned, were susceptible of contradiction, afforded the necessary opening. The military authorities, on the other hand, were alone in a position to examine circumstances arising from the exercise of their powers, and only their disavowals would weigh with the public. It was, however, questionable whether they would lend themselves to investigations merely designed to do justice and whether, even if they did so, they would consent to make public information in conflict with imperial statements.

A superior interest forced them to act. The attacks against the Catholic religion had attained an acuteness which gravely menaced the internal peace of Germany.

On September 17th, less than ten days after the message of the Emperor to President Wilson, the General Staff of Berlin in a circular



addressed to corps commanders directed these to "act energetically against the spreading of these stories which are of a character to offend a large part of the population."<sup>1</sup> Subsequently the commanders of the 7th, 10th, and 11th Army Corps threatened to take proceedings against the propagators of rumours injurious to the Catholic clergy.

The general commanding the 10th Army Corps, for example, issued on September 29, 1914, the following circular<sup>2</sup>:

"Recently rumours relating to atrocities attributed to Belgian priests and emanating from sources unworthy of belief have been put in circulation and have been directed in a disgraceful fashion against the whole Catholic clergy. The honour of the Catholic clergy as well as the religious sentiment of the Catholic population has been wounded by these reports. The implication of the whole Catholic clergy and notably of the clergy of our country in these particular criminal acts attributed to Belgian priests, acts of which the proof is often difficult,

<sup>1</sup> See R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügegeist im Völkerkrieg*, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> See R. P. Duhr, *loc. cit.*, p. 40.

tends to menace the religious peace of the German people in these times of stress when members of all creeds are united in defence of their country. I will take vigorous action against the authors and propagators of these calumnies whether they are propagated orally, in writing, or by pictures. I will also prosecute the press if it participates in this propagation.

"VON LINDE-SUDEN,  
"General in Command."

It was in this frame of mind and under the influence of these instructions that the military authorities were induced to accede to the demands for an enquiry which were formulated by the association *Pax*.

The results to which these enquiries have led are conclusive. Facts affirmed in the most categorical terms by persons who held themselves out as ocular witnesses prove to be devoid of any foundation. As new stories were disproved, *Pax* communicated them to the press, together with the attestations by the military authorities which established the falsity of them.

These are the communications which, under

the name of *Informations Pax*, have been published in the principal Catholic organs, such as the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, the *Bayerische Kurier*, the *Münchener Tageblatt*, *Germania*, etc.

A German clergyman, R. P. Bernhard Duhr, S. J., has prepared a collection of them entitled: *Der Lügegeist im Völkerkrieg Kriegsmärchen*,<sup>2</sup> and the present study is largely drawn from this source.

Yet if the *Informations Pax* have succeeded to a certain extent in checking the development of legends in regard to the participation of the Belgian clergy in the hostilities, they have neither destroyed the belief in, nor arrested the transmission of, other incidents belonging to the same cycle. Having only an ecclesiastical bearing they have confined their attention almost exclusively to the reprehensible acts attributed to priests. They have not sought to ascertain, except where mutilations were concerned, whether the stories about the lay

<sup>2</sup> München-Regensburg, *Verlagsanstalt*, Vorm. G. J. Manz, *Buch- u. Kunstdruckerei*, 1915.

R. P. Duhr is also the author of other patriotic and religious works: *Mit Gott für König und Vaterland!—Kriegsgebetbüchlein—Mut und Vertrauen*, etc.

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population did not bear identical legendary characteristics:

R. P. Duhr in his work has adopted the same point of view:

"It is a patriotic duty," he says in his preface, "to explode these legends. Nothing is more necessary to us Germans in this time of war, than unity, to which religious discord and sectarian animosities oppose serious obstacles. The Catholic section of the community must experience profound sadness and bitterness in seeing utterly baseless accusations made against its clergy. A calm exposure of the facts is particularly calculated to stop this propagation and to hinder the aggravation of hostility."

Thus Father Duhr, like the association *Pax*, is not concerned with the exposition of the truth except in so far as it affects the interests of the German Catholics and the internal peace of his country.

It becomes then necessary to enquire what justification there may be for assigning this arbitrary limit and artificially isolating acts attributed to priests from those imputed to

laymen. One must determine at what stage the legendary character of the one ceases to imply that of the other.

Such are, briefly stated, the object, the method, and the sources of this book.

## CHAPTER II

### THEMATIC MOTIVES OF THE LEGENDS

THE accounts of the popular fury in Belgium, of which the official German enquiries have established the imaginary character, have been, for the most part, taken from the *Informations Pax*. They are translated here from the text derived in part from the German Catholic press and in part from the notes of R. P. Bernhard Duhr. The present chapter is entirely devoted to their faithful reproduction; no comment is added. The titles under which they have appeared, and also their form, have been scrupulously respected.

I have endeavoured to classify them in logical order. A rapid examination suffices indeed to make apparent amongst them a certain number of well-defined "thematic motives." R. P. Duhr has already grouped many under some general heads. His summary

classification has been a little extended and completed. It includes the following motives: treason, incitements to murder and strife, treacherous attacks, the discovery of machine-guns on church towers, murders, poisonings, and mutilations of the wounded. Some stories have been included which, although they do not refer to episodes which have occurred in Belgium, exhibit identical themes and have for this reason an interest as illustrations.

### SECTION I. ACTS OF TREACHERY

Systematic spying by wireless—The curé and the telephone  
—Priest and telephone—An experience and yet false  
—Subterranean telephone and criminal use of the church clock—Signalling and treachery at Malines—The curé of Petite-Fosse did not practise spying—Signalling from the church tower—An innocent priest shot—I saw it myself—The “inevitable priest” is more than amiable.

R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügegeist*, pp. 34 to 37.

#### SYSTEMATIC SPYING BY WIRELESS

“An Uhlan related that in August, 1914, at Ausbach, the rector and director of a school at Metz installed a wireless station on the roof of his establishment and that he thus communicated news of the movements of the troops

to the enemy. This tale was told throughout the town and its surroundings; it was even added that the rector was shot.

“*Informations Pax* received the following information on the subject:

‘GOVERNMENT OF THE FORTRESS OF METZ

‘15855 :237

‘METZ, 11-11-14.

‘The information reproduced in your letter of October 28th is false.’

“The *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* of October 30, 1914, No. 301, published a military correspondence of Erich Kohrer under the title ‘On the Lines of Communication,’ in which there is the following reference to Bastogne:

‘When they penetrated to Bastogne not a living soul was to be seen. Two weeks passed without their seeing any inhabitants. Later some risked showing themselves a little and brought their produce to sell to the soldiers. The last telegraphist left alone behind had been killed by shots fired from a farm by two sisters and three men. The farm caught our gaze as we left the station,



## Thematic Motives of the Legends 19

with its sad walls in ruins, in the darkness. It is a humble monument of the infamy and stupidity of the Belgians.

'The Fathers who had installed the wireless station on the priests' college at Bastogne were cleverer: they signalled to France all that they learned of the movements of the German troops. The Fathers scattered in all directions, and the seven hundred cells of the large college dormitory were available at the right moment for the brave soldiers of the Landsturm battalion.'

"The imperial military authority at Bastogne has given the following information:

'1ST BATTALION, MOBILE INFANTRY OF THE  
'LANDSTURM II. COLOGNE.  
'BASTOGNE, December 6, 1914.

'There is no question here of nuns or priests. There is indeed a wireless post in the priests' college but it is only meant for study and not for the transmission of communications. Besides, the apparatus was not working at the beginning of the war and was also no longer in the college. Finally, there are only about one hundred cells.

'(s) CAPTAIN SCHOENEN,  
'*Chief of the Battalion.*'

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"The tales of wireless posts have already many precedents. The *Saale-Zeitung* published, on April 28, 1914, an article in these terms:

### A JESUIT SPY

'The Berlin correspondent of the *Daily Mail* published private information of the greatest interest which, as he affirms, was held very secret in Germany and was not supposed to be known by the public.

'According to this information a Franco-phil Jesuit had been spying in Alsace for the benefit of France. In the military telegraph department in Alsace-Lorraine it had been noticed for a long time that wireless communication with the French frontier was often interfered with in a mysterious manner and without any obvious cause. Finally, there was discovered on the roof of a Jesuit college in Metz a wireless post with the help of which the French military authorities were advised of important German military information. The apparatus was immediately seized. It is not known what measures were taken against this singular priest.'

"On May 8th, *Informations Pax* published the following note from an authoritative source:

'(1) There is no Jesuit seminary at Metz.

'(2) It is not true that there was discovered at Metz a wireless telegraphy installation, by means of which the French military authorities had been put in possession of important German military information.

'(3) It is not true that a "Francophil Jesuit" has carried on systematic espionage in Alsace-Lorraine for the benefit of France.'

"The Jesuits at Graz (Styria) had received at their churches, in January, 1913, some communications of a military character by wireless telegraphy; but the Austrian Minister of War declared on the 30th of January, 1913, that this information was false."

\*       \*       \*

*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 304, April 14, 1915.

### THE CURÉ AND THE TELEPHONE

"A wounded soldier who was being cared for at the hospital of Buer i. W., said that the curé of Dammweiler near Verdun had been executed. The priest had had a subterranean telephone in his presbytery and he had communicated with the French troops.

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"*Informations Pax* have received from the Prussian Ministry of War the following information:

'In response to your letter of the 14th of January, 1915 (No. F. 38), the Ministry of War (Military Bureau of Enquiry into Violations of Military Law) has the honour to make known to you that enquiry has not established that the curé of Dammweiler has had in his presbytery a subterranean telephone nor that he had communicated some information to the French troops.

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'"

\* \* \*

*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 429, May 29, 1915.

### PRIEST AND TELEPHONE

"A letter from the front, addressed from Creue, reports that the curé of the place had, by means of a subterranean telephone, told the German positions to the enemy. He had been arrested and taken away on the 9th of December, 1914. *Informations Pax* received from the Prussian Ministry of War the following information:

'It appears from the public enquiry that

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the curé of Creue has been taken away for reasons of security.

‘(s) BAUER, WAGNER.’

“The *Weilburger Anzeiger*, a newspaper published in the district of Oberlahn, reproduced in its No. 286 of December 8, 1914, a letter relating to the war under the title of ‘What our Soldiers Write.’ It reads:

‘Yesterday the curé of the neighbouring town of R . . . was hanged by our troops. He had hidden in his cellar under some casks of wine a telephonic apparatus connected with the enemy. On the day of his death whilst a religious service for our troops was being celebrated in the church he had informed the French of it; they at once bombarded the town with heavy artillery and caused us some losses.’

“The town to which he refers is called Roye. An extract from a letter sent from the front, put at the disposition of *Informations Pax*, expresses itself on the subject in these terms:

‘I wish to tell you now how it happened that Roye was bombarded in this fashion. We had been here for nearly five weeks when

the French suddenly began to fire. The whole place was searched in order to discover if there were not in some corner a telephonic wire communicating with them; but nothing was found. The bombardment continued to increase in intensity; new searches were made and it was discovered that an old Catholic priest was communicating with the French artillery from his cellar. He was at once taken away (but how) and conducted to the headquarters of the division. He came before a court-martial and was condemned to death; he was hanged the same day; he was not worth a bullet.

'The old boy had all the time been protected by us; on his door was written: "To be spared: old priest: do not enter. (By Order)" and this is what came of it: he has caused misfortune to us as well as to his fellow-citizens. There were enough dead and wounded. The fellow was already seventy years old, he had run his course. The worst of it was that he wore the sign of the Red Cross. For the future, priests ought to be more closely watched.'

"*Informations Pax* have received about this subject from the Prussian Ministry of War the following information:

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‘It appears from the public enquiry that the affirmations contained in this letter from the front rest on some rumours without foundation.

‘(s) BAUER, WAGNER.’ ”

\* \* \*

*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 268, April 1, 1915.

### AN EXPERIENCE AND YET FALSE

“The *Schles. Ztg.* wrote in No. 721 of October 14, 1914:

‘A wounded officer, at present convalescent at his home in Schlesvig, writes to us upon the subject of his adventures in the western theatre of the war.

‘The infantry and artillery found themselves under cover; they were nevertheless fired upon with success by the French artillery. Our astonishment was great because it was impossible to see anything of the enemy in any direction and we ourselves had advanced under cover. A military telephonist followed a wire which ran beside ours in the ditch by the way; he found the end of it in a cellar where were the mayor and the curé, who by means of this communication had betrayed our position. The punishment

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for this action was naturally not overlooked on our part.'

"The Prussian Ministry of War wrote, in reference to this subject, on March 19, 1915, to *Informations Pax*:

'Enquiry has not confirmed the deeds mentioned in the letter reproduced by the *Schles. Ztg.* of October 14, 1914.

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'"

\*           \*           \*

*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 352, April 30, 1915.

### SUBTERRANEAN TELEPHONE AND CRIMINAL USE OF THE DIAL OF THE CHURCH CLOCK

"The firm Wilhelm Gerling of Darmstadt has discovered an illustrated post-card which represents a convoy of French prisoners. In the middle is seen an old French priest aged seventy-two. There is the following descriptive note. 'French civilians, among them a Catholic priest, prisoners at Darmstadt. They tried to betray the German positions by availing themselves of a subterranean telephone and of the dial of the church clock.' The Prussian



Ministry of War communicated in regard to this the following, to *Informations Pax*:

‘It appears from the enquiry that the curé Andrieux, of Flancourt, represented on the card, was suspected of espionage because a telephonic apparatus had been found in his cellar. He was, under this charge, arrested and conducted to Germany. The legal proceedings have been abandoned because the proof of espionage could not be obtained with certainty.

‘(s) BAUER, WAGNER.’

“The priest in question was taken back to France on the 8th of February last. It is to be hoped that the post-cards will disappear from the stationers’ shops.”

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R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügegeist*, pp. 57 and 58.

### SIGNALS AND TREACHERY AT MALINES

“The *Hannoversche Courier* wrote about Malines in its No. 31467 of November 24, 1914:

‘The cathedral of Malines, historical monument of great value, has suffered much from the bombardment of the town, but it certainly will be completely restored after the

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war. The well-known system of transmission of information to the Belgian troops has also been employed here. A priest, by means of the dial of the cathedral clock, betrayed to the Belgians the position of the German troops; but soon after this treachery was observed the dials were simply bombarded by our artillery and the priest was taken away from the tower.'

"*Informations Pax* requested the editor of the *Hannoversche Courier* to facilitate an official enquiry by bringing forward his witnesses. The journal answered in these terms:

'HANOVER, December 2, 1914.

'In response to your letter of the 27th of November, we have the honour to inform you that we have no reason for giving more details about this story.'

"The following result of the official enquiry was communicated to *Pax*:

'MINISTRY OF WAR,  
'BERLIN, W. 66, December 31, 1914.

'In response to your letter of the 27th November, we have the honour to inform you that the enquiry has yielded the following result:

‘As long as Malines was in the possession of the Belgians the tower of the cathedral was used as an observation post for the artillery; for this reason it was quite properly fired upon by our artillery. The damage sustained by the tower from our bombardment was relatively of little importance; the big dials and the hands were, apparently, completely spared. A little time after the entry of the Germans into Malines the tower was occupied and access was forbidden to civilians.

‘The day of the occupation of the town, the cathedral and particularly the tower were submitted to a long and very violent bombardment from the Belgians occupying Waelhem. A witness observed about five shots in the dial upon the north side of the tower. It was the shells of the Belgians which, from afar, caused the greater part of the damage sustained by the church. The treachery attributed to a priest in the article to which you allude is evidently completely imaginary. We have not been able to establish who was the author of this rumour.

‘By order

‘(s) BAUER, WAGNER.’”

\* \* \*

*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 268, April 1, 1915.

THE CURÉ OF PETITE-FOSSE HAS NOT PRACTISED  
ESPIONAGE

“The *Bamberg Tageblatt* of October 6, 1914, published, under the title of ‘Scenes of War in the Vosges,’ an account of the operations, containing this passage:

‘The French have everywhere, as we have already said, their spies who inform them by telephone or by optical signals of the place where the headquarters are installed.

‘As far as I am concerned I have developed from personal experience a particular distrust of the priests although they assure us, usually with learned words, that their hearts beat for us as for their compatriots, who, one knows, do not treat them in the most amiable fashion. In our case also the old curé of Petite-Fosse did not give, at least according to my judgment, an impression altogether reassuring. An inexplicable signal was given with the bell of the church; on another occasion the priest had informed himself through a reservist of the position of our artillery. This indiscreet curiosity about military matters was fatal to him; it provoked the imprisonment of the rever-

end gentleman, imprisonment which he had to share with all the men of the place. If the curé found himself in trouble so did we, for the French directed their guns nearer and nearer to the place where we had our quarters, and a shot even struck the gable of the neighbouring house.'

"Further on the article reproaches the priest with having hidden fifty bottles of wine.

"The Prussian Ministry of War informed *Informations Pax* on February 15, 1915:

'A public enquiry has not demonstrated that the curé of Petite-Fosse had spied upon our troops. As a set-off the tale is confirmed in regard to his momentary arrest and the wine which he had kept.

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'"

\* \* \*

*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 331, April 23, 1915.

### SIGNALS FROM THE BELFRY OF A CHURCH

"The *General-Anzeiger* for Mülheim (Ruhr) district reproduced a soldier's letter in its No. 299 of December 5, 1914, under the title of 'A Resident of Mülheim in the Field; the

Landsturm of Mülheim on Campaign.' Here is what one reads there:

'We had done enough for that day. The Belgians were dispersed; they reassembled later in the big recreation ground of Beverloo; the infantry and ourselves observed them closely every day; September 28th was the great day of complete annihilation. That day our artillery, the battalion of the Landsturm of Crefeld, the Uhlans, and our 4th squadron of Landsturm advanced together. Our advance guard endured the first shots a little before reaching Béringer [*sic*], near a dense wood. The soldier Bohnen of Moors was unhappily struck in the head and was killed on the spot, another had his horse killed under him. Anger possessed us and we set out to the attack lance in rest. The enemy dispersed in the wood followed by the Crefeld infantry battalion. We dismounted at Béringer where I saw, by chance, that they were signalling to the enemy from the top of the belfry. I communicated my information and some minutes afterwards our detachment, conducted by Sergeant Poblawsky, employee of the post-office at Mülheim, rushed towards the church. The sergeant forced the door and brought out two

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priests. He received the Iron Cross for this heroic act. Hardly had we left the church than the artillery, having from its side noticed the signal, destroyed by a shot nearly all the upper part.'

"The Prussian Ministry of War communicated with regard to this the following:

'The public enquiry has demonstrated that on September 27, 1914, signals were made from the belfry of the church at Pael (4 km. to the S. W. of Buringen), in such a manner that it was necessary to fire on the belfry. The direct participation of the priest found in the sacristy in this hostile act has not been established.

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'

"How could a priest in the sacristy prevent the belfry from being used for an improper purpose?"

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R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, p. 52.

### AN INNOCENT PRIEST SHOT

"The *Frankfurter Volkszeitung* has received from Longuyon a card dated September 11, 1914, which contains this:

'I have come here as ordered with . . . Longuyon belongs to the series of towns which have been greatly tried by the treachery of the inhabitants. The soldiers and those employed there can talk of nothing except that the curé of the town made signals from the belfry and has been shot for this act. I was present this morning at the moment when an officer told a group of Fathers and other religious people of Cologne, who had twenty minutes to wait, that the superior military court had opened an enquiry into this affair and had established that the ecclesiastic in question had been executed although he was completely innocent. Orders were given that this respectable priest should be exhumed from the common grave and buried with all honours. And of sad stories like this there are many.' (*Bayer. Kurier*, No. 274, Oct. 1, 1914.)"

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*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 304, April 14, 1915.

#### I HAVE SEEN IT MYSELF

"The *Lübecker General-Anzeiger*, No. 381, A., of December 1, 1914, includes a military letter bearing the title 'Letter of a Doctor.' It contains the following passage:



'The fights here are particularly severe: they struggle on each side with the greatest fury. The English, who have assembled here the pick of their regiments, fight as heretofore in a very unfair manner; they fire on the Red Cross; they wave white flags as if they want to surrender, in order to open at once a murderous fire on our troops when they advance; they fire from trees and straw ricks and give arms to the inhabitants. The superior clergy appear to be directly organized by them. I have seen myself how they made signals to the enemy during our march by turning the sails of a windmill. On my suggestion a patrol of light infantry visited the mill and brought away five men dressed in smocks and the curé of the place. Naturally their trial was not long.'

"The doctor seems, however, to have been endowed with exceptional gifts of observation. The Prussian Ministry of War, dealing with this matter, communicated to *Informations Pax* that:

'It appears from the enquiry that no priest participated in the events of Lendelede.

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'"

\* \* \*

*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 304, April 14, 1915.

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### THE "INEVITABLE PRIEST" IS MORE THAN AMIABLE

"A certain Wilhelm Müller tells in No. 7 of the review *Durch alle Welt* (Peter J. Oestergaard, Berlin, Schöneberg, publisher: responsible editor, Jesco von Puttkamer of Dresde-Blasewitz) how he was sent into the enemy's country in order to get information; one finds in this tale the following passage:

'In the little town of M., about a third of the population had remained and one could find there something (notably victuals), a little more than at L., and much more than in the villages where stupid fear was very great, where the *francs-tireurs* were all-powerful, and where there was no more than a medley of abandoned houses in the middle of which some cats, some old women, and the inevitable priests who, it may be said, are usually spies, alone provided some signs of life.'

"It is in sufficiently questionable taste to mix in this manner the cats, the old women, and the priests, but we may at least ask the author not to speak of the 'inevitable priests' and not to designate them as being 'usually

spies.' If he knows some established facts let him bring forward a precise accusation. We Catholics can only regard these general statements as provocations. Should not internal peace reign? Does Mr. Jesco von Puttkamer ignore it? There are other reasons for a priest's not leaving his village besides the practice of espionage."

### SECTION 2. INCITEMENT TO MURDER AND COMBAT

The curé of Arlon has not been executed—The heads of German soldiers priced at fifty francs—The curé *franc-tireur* of Dinant—Young murderers—The Kingdom of Heaven for a murder—A false accusation—Priests executed at Ohrdruf.

*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 220, March 16, 1915.

#### THE CURÉ OF ARLON HAS NOT BEEN EXECUTED

"In the *Deutsche Konfektion* of Berlin, an article bears the title 'With Gifts on the Western Front near General von Emmich,' by Herr Eduard Koopmann, of Hanover, proprietor of the well-known silk house.

"One reads there:

'At Arlon, the first French locality,' we  
\* Arlon, chief town of the province of Luxemburg, belonging to Belgium.

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received an ever memorable impression of the horrors of war. Nearly every house had been bombarded and burnt, even the church, where the curé had invited the inhabitants to armed resistance. We had learnt through some sentries to whom we had to show our passports that some hostages, watched night and day, had still to guarantee with their lives the good conduct of the inhabitants, whose cunning and untrustworthy attitude is still a continual source of misgiving.'

"At Freyung V. W., the rumour was current for some time that the curé of Arlon had been executed.

"The bureau of *Informations Pax* addressed itself, in reference to these facts, to the military authorities. It received from the Prussian Ministry of War the following answer, dated February 24, 1915:

'From enquiries effected it appears that no priest has been executed at Arlon; the curé of the town, Kupper, in particular, is alive to-day.

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'"

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R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, pp. 18 and 19.

### HEADS OF GERMAN SOLDIERS PRICED AT FIFTY FRANCS

"A soldier of the Landsturm of Unterleinach writes from Liège to his wife:

'I was yesterday at the citadel where are the prisoners. I saw there some great criminals. There were from 10 to 12 priests who have paid fifty francs to whoever would kill a German soldier; they will all be massacred (!). There were also 8 civilians in a cell: one of them cut off the breasts of a Red Cross nurse; another cut off someone's fingers; all the criminals will be put to death (!).'

"*Informations Pax*, in consequence of a demand for information, has received the following letter from the government of Liège:

'There is not a word of truth in what the Landsturm soldier of Unterleinach says. If his identity was known he would be punished for having, by his thoughtlessness, propagated false and stupid news and having probably troubled not only his comrades but also the inhabitants of his village.

'LIEUTENANT-GENERAL N. N.

'Governor.'

"How another version of the same subject, where only eight francs per head were paid, found a wide diffusion is shown in the letter of another soldier of the Landsturm to his brother-in-law, in a field hospital of the Bavarian reserve.

"In this letter one reads as follows:

'The population is always anew excited by the monks, for there is a surprising number of priests here; there are, however, already some hundreds who have been executed and massacred because they continually excited the population and paid eight francs, that is to say eight marks, for every German head. They preach from the pulpit but there are always some people who understand them. We must continue to keep our eyes open.' (*Bayer. Kurier*, No. 290, October 17, 1914.)"

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R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, pp. 60 and 61.

#### THE FRANC-TIREUR PRIEST OF DINANT

"The *Kasseler Allgemeine Zeitung* reports in its issue No. 261, dated September 20, 1914, under the title of 'The Bombardment of Dinant':

'Another day has elapsed without one seeing or hearing anything. The inhabitants were however armed by this time. The priests from their pulpits called the young and old to battle; to all, even to the children, rifles and revolvers with ammunition were distributed in profusion. The beautiful church at this time resembled an arsenal.'

"The informant of the *Kasseler Allgemeine Zeitung* is a young waiter apprentice at a café, aged sixteen, who had only been in Belgium since July 25th, three weeks before, and who did not know French. Notwithstanding this, he understood what the priests preached from the pulpit!

"The *Berliner Tageblatt* of September 26th gave a different account in an article entitled '*In dem zerstorten Dinant*' from its special correspondent Heinrich Binder:

'The priest of Notre Dame, with indignation which did him honour, uttered some strong words in an address to his parishioners. He could not understand the blindness with which the inhabitants were opposing themselves to the iron omnipotence of the Germans.' (*Ausgsb. Postztg.*, No. 502, October 31, 1914.)"

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R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügegeist*, pp. 53 and 54.

#### YOUNG MURDERERS

"A soldier of the Landwehr had spread the following report in Oberhausen (Rhine Provinces):

'At Libramont, the Catholic priest and the mayor, after a sermon, distributed cartridges to the people so that the inhabitants might fire upon the German soldiers. Further, a young boy of thirteen put out the eyes of a wounded officer, and some women from forty to fifty years of age mutilated our wounded soldiers.

'These women, as well as the priest and mayor, were executed together at Treves. The young boy was sentenced to a great number of years in a reformatory.'

"The Commandant of the garrison at Treves, in connection with this, communicated to *Informations Pax* the following information:

'HEADQUARTERS OF GARRISON J, No. 2486,  
'TREVES, December 19, 1914.

'On August 27th last, five Belgian *francs-tireurs* (two workmen, two farm-labourers, one carpenter) who had been condemned to



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death by court-martial, were shot at Treves. A sixth Belgian, who was very young, has been condemned to many years of imprisonment. There were among the condemned no women, nor priests nor a mayor.

‘(s) COLONEL WEYRACH.’

“The *Thüringer Monatsblätter* (the organ of the Thüringer Waldverein) reprinted on the 1st October, 1914, a letter from a soldier in which one notes the following:

‘Seen at Julémont the first dead bodies. Amongst them a boy aged fourteen, who, on the instigation of a priest, had killed in their beds two soldiers of the 82d.’

“The *Tremonia* (Dortmund) communicated with the editor of the publication and heard by way of reply on October 20th, that the afore-said information proceeded from a letter from a junior officer called Ernst Möller, attached to the 94th regiment of reserves. ‘He has not been able to substantiate what has been related about the young boy.’

“The editor of the *Thüringer Monatsblätter* added: ‘I am not aware to what extent the

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source is reliable.' (*Tremonia*, No. 292, October 24, 1914.)"

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R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, pp. 54 and 55.

### THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN FOR A MURDER

"A Catholic priest was returning by rail to Mayence on October 5, 1914. In the same compartment with him were five soldiers of the Ersatz battalion of the 94th regiment of reserve infantry. One of them, called Rössner, belonging to the 1st Company, recounted to his comrades the following incident, which he repeated at the priest's request:

'In the Belgian village of Patsie (?) the Catholic priest had very kindly accommodated a German major and his servant. The priest had thereupon promised the Kingdom of Heaven to a young boy aged thirteen if he would kill the two Germans.

'The boy committed the crime, and the priest together with the young boy was afterward executed.'

"On the priest's commenting on the unlikelihood of this story, the soldier vehemently main-

tained his assertion, and even became rude to the priest.

"The incident was subsequently published widely in the Rhenish press.

"Here is the result of the official enquiry:

'MINISTRY OF WAR, No. 1866. 14 Z. v.

'The public examination, in particular the hearing under oath of the reservist Rössner and of several officers of the 94th regiment of reserve infantry, has given the following result:

'At the commencement of the campaign, during the forward march of the corps to which the 94th regiment of reserve infantry belonged, on the outskirts of a village whose name it has not been possible to identify exactly, there were found by the roadside the bodies of two or three civilians who had been shot. One of these was that of a boy of thirteen, another that of an adult clad in black. It has not been possible to establish whether this was the body of a priest; furthermore, it has not been possible to discover by whom or why these people had been shot. The story of the priest and of the young boy, which is in question, spread generally as a "rumour" among the troops

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on the march, but it is not possible now to check its accuracy.

‘By order,

‘(s) BAUER, WAGNER.’”

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*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 304, April 14, 1915.

### A FALSE ACCUSATION

“A punitive expedition was directed against Orchies on September 24, 1914, because this locality was responsible for an attack on an ambulance. A non-commissioned officer of the regiment of pioneers belonging to Hohenfeld, who took part in it, gives an account thereof in a letter reproduced by the *Kitzinger Zeitung* (No. 270) of November 22, 1914.

“At the end the writer of the letter advances the final accusation:

‘The priest of the place bears a great part of the responsibility for these atrocities; he has incited the people, by means of posters publicly displayed in the locality, not to spare any German but to destroy all.’

“The Prussian Ministry of War writes *à propos* this charge to *Informations Pax*:

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'The public enquiry has not shown that the priest at Orchies has, by means of public posters, incited the population not to spare any German but to destroy all.

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'"

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R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, pp. 49 to 51.

### PRIESTS SHOT AT OHRDRUF

"Picture post-cards representing some Belgian *francs-tireurs* were exposed in September, 1914, in the shop window of a stationer at Cassel with the following notice:

'Belgian *francs-tireurs* including a priest and his sacristan of Louvain (Belgium) were shot on September 9th at Ohrdruf (43 persons). The priest incited the people to fire upon the German soldiers and caused machine-guns to be placed upon the belfry of the church of Louvain.' (*Kitzinger Zeitung*, No. 270, November 21, 1914.)

"These post-cards were seized by the police when brought to their notice. A question put to the Commandant at the Thuringian exercising ground at Ohrdruf elicited the following information:

COMMAND OF THE EXERCISING GROUND,  
'OHRDRUF, September 30, 1914.

"MR. A. W. ATZERT,  
'Cassel,  
'Julienstr. 61

'In response to your enquiry the Commandant begs to inform you, in returning herewith the card forwarded by you, that on the arrival of a convoy of 260 Belgian *francs-tireurs* an attempt was made at flight and an officer was assaulted. These incidents cost the lives of five Belgians. It does not appear that there was a priest among them. The person represented on the postcard sent herewith has probably also been killed. He does not appear to be a priest, so far as one can judge from the photograph, in spite of his long garment. According to one of the escort this man several times boasted of having killed thirty German soldiers. If only for this reason the Commandant does not think that he was really a priest. Nobody has been executed here. The General commanding the 11th Army Corps at Cassel has caused these cards to be confiscated. The Commandant will take steps to get this confiscation order put into operation at Cassel without delay. To complete the matter the Commandant begs to

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inform you that a Belgian priest named Collard, of Rosée, is kept here as a hostage for the maintenance of order in his commune. He is not accused of any crime.' (*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 869, October 6, 1914.)

"The *Herner Zeitung*, an official sheet, published in its No. 211 of September 9th, among various military items, an article on the French camp at the Ohrdruf exercising ground; the article ends in the following way:

'Among the French prisoners is a Belgian priest who collected his parishioners in the church so that they might fire from this ambush on the German soldiers. What a pity that German soil should be fouled by such *canaille*. And a State which employs bandits of this kind dares to invoke the rights of peoples!'

"The secretariat of the Catholic workmen at Herne i. W. has asked the General in command at Münster if the facts of criminality charged by the *Herner Zeitung* against Belgian priests were well-founded.

"The General Command answered this question by the letter given below:

'GENERAL COMMAND OF THE 7TH ARMY CORPS.

'ABT. IID No. 242.

'MÜNSTER, September 16, 1914.

*'To the secretariat of the Catholic workmen  
of Herne:*

'In reply to your letter of the 9th inst. it is brought to your notice that the story of a Belgian priest at the exercising ground at Ohrdruf, reported by the *Herne Zeitung*, No. 211, of the 9th inst. does not in any way agree with the truth as it has since been established here. The necessary representations have been made to the *Herne Zeitung* in reference to this article. Moreover, it goes without saying that offences committed by isolated priests have nothing to do with the ecclesiastical system as such nor with religion.

'FRHR. VON BISSING,  
'General.'

### SECTION 3. TREACHEROUS ATTACKS

An inaccurate statement in spite of a contrary declaration—

An unfortunate accident—Another eyewitness—We are not in a position to offer explanations—An established fact which cannot be denied(!)—Someone has said it. Who? I do not know—"German Letters from the Front"—The night of Andenne, or the curé with the bell.



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*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 247, March 25,  
1915.

### AN INACCURATE STATEMENT IN SPITE OF A CONTRARY DECLARATION

"The *Hessische Schulzeitung* has depicted the following scene under the title of 'Letters from the Front, by a Hessian Teacher':

'It was the last stop in Belgium. Before us was the village of Ch . . . I halted my men in the space in front of the church and sent one of them back to say that all was safe. We encamped without precaution; I rested on the step of the church. At that moment we heard two or three strange and suppressed noises in the belfry. We looked at one another and leapt up. Suddenly "knack, knack." It was a Belgian greeting. I cried "To arms." But where ought we to fire? It was impossible to see anything of the blackguards. The church door was suddenly opened and the curé rushed out at the head of a number of scoundrels armed with revolvers. The monk caught sight of me. I had not my rifle at hand or rather it was too far off. Fortunately I had immediately seized my "Browning" and taken good aim. The others, except three or four

whom the German rifles dispatched to the next world, fled into the church.'

"On enquiry the editor of the *Hessische Schulzeitung* imparted the name of the author, adding this remark: 'There is no doubt about the accuracy of this story.'

"The Prussian Ministry of War, on February 21st, informed the *Pax* bureau, in connection with this matter that—

'The enquiry has not furnished proof in support of the facts mentioned.

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'"

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*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 220, March 16,  
1915.

#### AN UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT

"In No. 460 (September 10, 1914) the *Berliner Tageblatt* published the following account of the war signed by Professor Dr. A. Bickel and entitled 'With an Ambulance Column in the Belgian Theatre of War.'

'In certain regions we are reminded by the

destruction of farms, villages, and small provincial towns of the Thirty Years' War. The mark of steel which necessity has compelled us to impress on those regions where we had not to contend with regular Belgian troops is evidence against those false prophets who taught their followers this atrocious *métier* and who caused the horrors of a terrible fight to the death. In crossing Haccourt-Hallembaye on the left bank of the Meuse,—it was on the 18th of August, one of those lovely summer days which we usually enjoy at this epoch—I recall how we were suddenly exposed to a fire directed upon us, from a peaceful lawn not far from the church, by a band of the inhabitants. Nothing came of it except that part of these people were put to death by our foot soldiers and part were made prisoners. Presently firing took place from the church itself so that our artillery had to intervene. The roof of the nave was soon in flames. In the choir, to which our soldiers had penetrated, they found the curé slain by a shell and other inhabitants wounded. These last were led out with the rest. It was the curé who had organized the resistance of the people, who had led them into the church, and who had devised the plot against our troops.'

"The Prussian Ministry of War sent to the *Pax* bureau the following note on the above:

'Enquiry has given the following result:

'The curé of the commune of Haccourt did not organize the resistance of the inhabitants; he did not cause them to enter the church and he did not arrange the plot against our troops. He was not killed by the bursting of a shell in the church of the place. There has been no fighting whatever there. On the other hand our troops were fired on while crossing Hallembaye, which is a kilometre to the north of Haccourt. Hallembaye was burnt by our troops. The curé of Haccourt who, accompanied by a boy of fifteen, marched alongside a transport column to which he showed the way heard the detonations at Hallembaye and saw the village burn. He hastened with his young compatriot to a chapel there and it was there that he was killed, as well as the boy, by a chance shot.

'By order,

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'

"It was thus an unfortunate accident."

\* \* \*

R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, p. 70.

ANOTHER EYEWITNESS

"The soldier of the Landwehr, Hermanns de Bracheln, belonging to the 8th company of the 68th reserve infantry regiment, has made the following declaration:

"He was billeted on the 19th and 20th of August at the house of a curé in the south of Belgium. This priest, after having offered him hospitality, had fired upon him and his comrade when they left. After that the curé was shot.

"*Informations Pax* addressed itself to the headquarters of the 68th reserve infantry regiment at Juliers and asked for confirmation of this statement; it received the following reply:

'No man of the 6th company knows anything about this story. Hermanns belongs not to the 8th company but to the 6th.

'RUSCHENBUCH,  
'*Chief Captain of the Battalion.*'

'Further investigation of the matters in question has given no result. Nobody in the regiment knows anything of it. It

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appears that the affirmations of the soldier Hermanns of the 6th company of the 68th reserve infantry regiment are inaccurate.

‘(s) VON RUPSCH.’”

\*           \*           \*

*Vorwärts*, May 2, 1915 (1st edition).

### HISTORY OF FRANCS-TIREURS

“Some days ago there appeared a pamphlet published by the *Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt* (Stuttgart-Berlin), bearing the title *Der Franktireurkrieg in Belgien. Geständnisse der Belgischen Presse*.

“For a just appreciation of the information which appears in the Belgian press it is not without interest to reproduce the subjoined article from *Germania*.

‘The book includes particularly the following citation from the journal *Le Nouveau Précurseur* (Antwerp No. 223), relating to the “blood bath” of Burneau:

“The village curé fired from the church belfry with a fowling piece. He was seen, brought down, and shot.”

‘The citation is, doubtless, faithfully reproduced in the pamphlet and from this

point of view one may consider it as an admission, but the fact to which the citation alludes is false.

'As we wrote in the number of *Germania* dated March 5, 1915, under the heading "Further Unfounded Rumours" the Prussian Ministry of War made to *Informations Pax* on February 13th the following communication:

"The enquiry has given the following result: the curé of the commune of Burneau has not been shot but is to-day carrying on his ministry.

"By order,

'“(s) BAUER, WAGNER.”’

"It might be expected after this, that the citation reproduced in the pamphlet in question would disappear, or, at least, that a footnote would call attention to the fact that the statement in the citation was denied as a result of an official enquiry by the German authorities. All that *Germania* has to say is:

'The rectification supplies proof that it is necessary to use with prudence facts reported by the Belgian press itself.’”

\* \* \*

R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, pp. 70 and 71.

WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO OFFER  
EXPLANATIONS

"The *Zwickauer Zeitung* has reproduced in its No. 240 of October 15, 1914, a soldier's letter in which one reads:

'Ruevalle, August 25, 1914. We have above all to put up with *francs-tireurs*. No later than yesterday eight more were shot, among them a Catholic priest in whose house a major of the 133d infantry regiment had been killed.'

"*Informations Pax* addressed to the editor on October 18th a request for more precise details so that the story might be investigated. The editor replied in the following terms:

'In answer to your letter of the 18th inst., we have the honour to inform you that we are not at present in a position to give you the particulars asked for. Doubtless if you renew your enquiry after the war is over we shall then be better able to satisfy you.'"

\*           \*           \*



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*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 331, April 23, 1915.

### AN ESTABLISHED FACT WHICH CANNOT BE DENIED(!)

"The reservist Anton Vogt, on leave at Gleidorf, has related the following:

'The 80th regiment of foot artillery rejoined us at Sennheim on August 9th. A captain of this regiment told me this story: "When we crossed Eisenheim yesterday we were fired on from the house of a Catholic priest. When questioned the priest answered: 'Nobody has fired from my house.' Hardly had we resumed our march when a further shot was fired from the same house. I returned immediately and shot the priest.'"

"Comrades belonging to his company had also heard this story. It was possible, therefore, to verify whether the regiment in question was the 80th foot artillery.

"The reservist guaranteed the truth of his story; it was an established fact which could not be denied.

"As regards this the Ministry of War has sent the subjoined statement to *Informations Pax*:

'In reply to your letter of February 11, 1915, the Ministry of War (Military Bureau of Enquiry into violations of public rights) has the honour to inform you that the accuracy of the statement made by the reservist Anton Vogt has not been confirmed. There is no place named Eisenheim in Alsace-Lorraine. In the villages of Ensisheim and Isenheim nothing is known of the incident in question.

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'

\* \* \*

R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, pp. 71 and 72.

SOMEONE HAS SAID IT. WHO? I DO NOT KNOW

"The *Niederschlesischer Wanderer* of Râuscha, a district of Görlitz, published in its No. 112, September 19, 1914, with the consent of the signatory, a letter from reserve lieutenant Rohlich, a tradesman at Rauscha. It reads thus:

'On Monday, August 24th, we proceeded: near Saint-Pierrevillers we took up a position opposite the artillery and infantry established in the village. We soon dislodged the enemy and crossed the village; firing continued from the church: a man and two horses were

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the victims together with an officer of an adjacent battery originally from Görlitz.

'As was established later the curé of the place was the scoundrel who demonstrated in this fashion his love for his neighbour. He did not fail to receive his reward: towards evening he was shot.'

"Questioned, the writer of the letter admitted that all he had seen was that the firing was from the church.

'Whether or not it was the curé who fired from the church I did not see. That was told me by somebody the same evening. Who? I do not know. The curé, according to what I heard yesterday, is still alive although I had previously been told that he had been shot.' (*Bayer. Kurier*, No. 3, January 3, 1915, and *Kölnische Zeitung*, No. 1116, December 31, 1914.)"

\* \* \*

*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 1116, December 31, 1914.


### THE "GERMAN LETTERS FROM THE FRONT"

"The 'German Letters from the Front,' of Paul Schweder, war correspondent, have been published in numerous German papers. We

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have before us the *Landesbote* of Oldesloe in Holstein, No. 235, of October 7th, last. There we find a war correspondence entitled 'Under Shrapnel before Verdun (II).' We read there:

'On the way back we saw the inhabitants flying from the bombarded villages and again we felt pity for this human suffering. We also met on the return journey, while crossing the completely abandoned parts of Étain, a band of *francs-tireurs* at the head of which was a priest with hands bound.'

"What Paul Schweder saw is accurate but one cannot be expected to believe without further evidence that every 'prisoner' and every 'suspect' who is led out is a *franc-tireur*. Paul Schweder did not say it in express terms, but many of his readers will have so understood his words. 

"Here is the result of the official enquiry.

'MINISTRY OF WAR,  
'BERLIN W., 66, December 22, 1914.

'*To Pax, Association of German Catholic priests  
at Cologne; Cloister of Saint-Kunibert 16.*  
'(Concerning enquiry of October 14, 1914.)  
'The result of the official enquiry which,

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in the case in question, is probably concerned with Albert Deiber, a Catholic priest, an Alsatian by birth, brought before the Government on September 26th with many other inhabitants at Pagny, who had betrayed the position of the German outposts to the enemy. Public investigation has revealed nothing against Deiber who was given back his liberty and by his own desire was authorized to live at Oberhaslach, in Lower Alsace.

'By order

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'"

\* \* \*

R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, pp. 61 to 63.

### THE NIGHT OF ANDENNE, OR THE PRIEST WITH THE BELL

"The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, No. 249, of September 8th, has published under the title 'The Night of Andenne; a Fight with *francs-tireurs*,' by Dr. Alex Berg (Frankfort), a story of the fight of the German troops with *francs-tireurs* at Andenne. This is what one reads in the account:

'We learnt again that the perfectly organized fight in the streets had had its prologue.

On the previous evening when, just about six o'clock, the crossing of the Meuse had commenced the curé had traversed the town with a bell to give the signal for fight. The fight began immediately afterwards very fiercely. It is the one that we heard on the heights of Andenne.'

"On October 22d the bureau *Pax* applied to the military authority at Andenne to ask them to find out if this information was true. On December 8th it received the following reply:

'My personal enquiries from a large number of people, which were very carefully conducted, do not yield a single proof that the curé of Andenne excited the population to street fighting. Each one has a different story to tell about the events of last August 20th. That explains itself; the greater part of the people only saw a little of the actual fighting as they were mostly crouching with fear in their cellars.

'*Lieutenant-Colonel V. EULWEGE.*

'NAMUR, December 8, 1914.'

"The curé of Andenne would not have escaped a well-earned punishment had the German soldiers surprised him doing what he has been

accused of. But he lives! It is impossible to confirm anything which furnishes evidence of his culpability, but in spite of that the report spread.

“The *Frankfurter Zeitung* has reproduced this rectification with the remark that the author of this story had repeated in good faith that which was told him about the events preceding the attack of which he himself was a victim. If the curé of Andenne was not punished it is certainly a decisive proof that this grave accusation was unjustly levelled against him.

“The review of the war *Der Völkerkrieg*, chronicle of events since July 1, 1914, published by J. Hoffman at Stuttgart, has refuted accusations of all kinds directed against Belgian priests. The last section (16) makes an apology for them and remarks in a general way that:

‘It is impossible to bring a single solid proof of the accusation, of which so many letters from the front speak, that Belgian priests had participated in the fighting of the *francs-tireurs*. Such letters of this kind as we have reproduced in our chronicle—for example in the story of the events of Louvain

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and Andenne—have been omitted from the new editions.”

\*      \*      \*

Lorenz Müller. *Der Fels, Organ der Central-Auskunftsstelle der Katholischen Presse*, 10 Jahrg., nr. 7 u. 8, Januar, 1915, S. 151; nr. 9 u. 10, Februar, 1915, S. 181.

“The grave accusations that I have quoted to you are not only partly false and grossly distorted but entirely invented and in every respect untrue.

“In no case has it been officially shown that firing had taken place from the tops of belfries with the co-operation of the priests. All the known cases up to the present, susceptible of elucidation, having reference to pretended cruelties by Catholic priests in this war, have been, without exception, found to be false or entirely invented.”

### SECTION 4.    MACHINE-GUNS ON THE BELFRIES

Priests with machine-guns on the belfries—The curé, the machine-gun, and the famous tunnel—Curé and machine-gun—Another false accusation from the *Schlesische Zeitung*—Tales which cannot be controlled.



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R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, pp. 41 to 47.

### PRIESTS WITH MACHINE-GUNS ON THE BELFRIES

"Priests armed with machine-guns, posted on the belfries of churches, appear by hundreds in the original tales from Belgium and France. The result is, each time, the execution of the traitor.

"Repeatedly already tales of this kind have passed from newspapers into books. (See, for example, Pauls, *Aus eiserner Zeit*, Elmshorn, 1914; Hans Leitzen, *Der grosse Krieg in Feldpost-Briefen*, Wolfenbüttel, 1914; *Feldpost-Briefen*, 1914, edited by Herm Sparr, Leipzig, 1915.)

"The novels are all engrossed with the theme. Thus Richard Sexau has published in his book *Blut und Eisen* a short story, *Der Zweifler*, wherein he depicts a fight for the possession of a village situated on the French frontier and defended by some enemy troops and some hidden *francs-tireurs*. The adversary finds his chief stronghold in the church of the place, on the belfry of which a machine-gun is in action. The German lieutenant Holk advances to the assault of the tower. 'Now he has attained

the summit. A devil in a black robe is found there, his eyes fixed on the gun sights, his hand on the instrument of murder: it is the abbot.'

"This fragment is so suitable for the literary supplement of the *M.-Augsburger Abendzeitung*, the *Sammler* (January 4th to 9th), for its 'series of the best novels written under the influence of the first weeks of war' that it reproduces it and appropriates it. (*Bayer. Kurier*, No. 14, January 14, 1915.)

"Many of these stories of church belfries are derived less from ill-will than from ignorance.

"Three facts are, generally, completely ignored: the first is the right of ownership of the parish over the belfry of the church; the second is the uniform of the Belgian town guard; the third is that many priests have been taken to Germany only as hostages who have not been guilty of the least fault or who are not even suspects.

"In Belgium, the church belfries are, according to the French decrees of 1809 and 1813, which are still effective, the property of the parish, whilst the rest of the church is the property of the vestry of the church (*Kirchengemeinde*). The parish has the right on certain

days, days of national fêtes, etc., of ringing the bells which are in the tower. The burgomaster possesses the keys of the belfry for this purpose. The vestry of the church has only the right to use the belfry for the needs of the religious offices and for this reason the curé also possesses a belfry key. If one wishes to put the responsibility upon someone for the installation of machine-guns on the belfries it is then the burgomaster whom one should consider in the first place and not the curé. Moreover, neither of them should be held responsible. The machine-guns have not been put on the belfries either by the burgomaster or the curé but by the military authority. When the latter considers it convenient, for military reasons, to place a machine-gun on a belfry it does not ask the permission of the burgomaster or of the curé. The burgomaster, no more than the curé, is then in a position to refuse the keys. In case of necessity, when they are not put rapidly enough at his disposition, the military authority simply forces the door leading to the belfry. The situation is entirely similar in France. In virtue of the well-known

law of separation the churches have become completely the property of the State. The curé can then do nothing if the belfry is employed for military purposes. (Cf. *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 956, November 5, 1914.)

"It is necessary to add to these considerations that the uniform of the Belgian town guard can very easily be mistaken for the religious dress by any man ignorant of it and, moreover, by any man not warned. The Belgian town guard wears notably a black blouse, more often a dark grey one which descends as far as the knees and which, in consequence, resembles in a striking manner the short cassock of our priests. A black hat, rigid, high, and round, serves him for headgear. A black, yellow, and red cord is tied round and is only seen by an observer who is particularly attentive to it. The rifle is the only arm.<sup>1</sup>

"At the beginning of Franco-German hostili-

<sup>1</sup> The description given here by R. P. Duhr of the uniform of the non-combatant town guard is not entirely correct. The distinctive signs of this uniform are essentially the blue blouse, the armlet, and the tricolour cockade. Many details belonging to this paragraph are therefore of a doubtful accuracy. We leave the responsibility for it to R. P. Duhr.

ties the town guard was particularly ordered to mount guard in the belfries of the places on the frontier and to inform the Belgian field army of the movements of the German advance.

"An example of defective observation and of faulty knowledge of events is furnished by a conversation which took place in a tram-car at Aix-la-Chapelle and in which a priest took part.

'A soldier of the Landsturm was concerned. He told how he had recently to escort a convoy of prisoners. As well as soldiers he had some civilians, also three priests who were accused of having taken part in the fighting against the Germans.

"How were they dressed?" asked the priest. "Had they long black cassocks?"

"No, not long ones but short ones coming nearly to the knee."

"Was this robe really black?"

"No, brown," was the response of the soldier.

"Then they were not priests; they must have been town guards. It is in this manner that these are dressed."

'The soldier was silent, surprised; this truly he did not know.' (*Münchener Tageblatt*, September 20, 1914.)

"Thus a whole series of these stories of machine-guns on belfries which involve the priests and which one has been able to follow up are shown to be pure products of the imagination.

"The curé of Arlon was said to have fired from the top of the belfry on the Germans and afterwards to have been shot. *Informations Pax* has received in reference to this subject the following information:

'ARLON, November 6, 1914.

'We have the honour to make known to you, whilst returning to you the enclosed letter, that the rumour in question is devoid of all foundation and that it probably rests upon a mistake.

'Yours faithfully

'For the communal administration

'REUTER.'

"The rumour was current at Düsseldorf that the curé of Orchamps<sup>1</sup> near Neufchâteau had been shot. With the sacristan and three inhabitants of the place he had fired from the top of the belfry with a machine-gun on the Germans at the moment of their passage.

<sup>1</sup> The correct name of the locality is Ochamps.

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“*Informations Pax* gathered from the Imperial Command at Namur the following information upon this subject:

‘MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF THE PROVINCE  
OF LUXEMBURG, ARLON,  
November 21, 1914.

‘Answer to the letter of the 21st of October, 1914, addressed to the Imperial Command at Namur:

‘It appears from the observations made by the 4th mobile squadron of the Landsturm of Bonn, at present at Bertrix, that the news suggesting that the curé of Orchamps, near Neufchâteau, accompanied by a sacristan and three inhabitants of the place had fired from the top of the belfry with a machine-gun upon the German troops, is not correct. The curé and the sacristan were only shut up as hostages in the church; they were at once released.

‘The Military Government  
‘ANDERHEID, *Captain & Adjutant.*’

“The sporting newspaper belonging to Mannheim, *Der Rad-tourist und der Automobilist*, official organ of the general union of cyclists D.T.C. and of the German union of touring clubs, of which the office is at Strasburg, pub-

lished in its No. 12, of October 20, 1914, a letter from a soldier expressed in these terms:

'On the 14th we were in action near Lagarde and here we could for the first time direct the fire from my battery on French territory. The result was that I silenced a French battery which violently bombarded our battery and that I set fire to a church. This upset me, but it does so no longer because the French fire, on principle, from the tops of the belfries with machine-guns and with the aid of the curé.'

"*Informations Pax* received on this subject the following letter.

'GENERAL COMMAND OF THE 21ST ARMY CORPS,  
'SAARBRÜCK, November 9, 1914.

'In response to your question concerning the accusation contained in the review against some Catholic priests I can only declare to you that I have no knowledge of a case where the French had fired from the top of a belfry with machine-guns and with the aid of the curé.

'V. MOSSNER,  
'*General-in-Command.*'

"Many also seem to have been deceived by the costumes. One reads in a letter dated



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September 9, 1914, of a wounded Bavarian captain of artillery:

'The ensign told me afterwards that the battery had been since August 23d before N. N. They got into position on August 20th at 11 A.M., and fired especially upon the French infantry. In the evening towards 5 o'clock an aeroplane appeared with the black German cross and flew over the battery at a height of six hundred metres. A little while afterwards came the first shots fired on the battery; they fell short, beyond, or to one side. Each shot was then corrected. Then began a murderous fire entirely directed on an advanced train completely hidden in a ravine. The horses were particularly exposed; a large number were slaughtered. Later it appeared that as well as the French aviator a French artillery officer had observed all the positions. This last was found not far off dressed as a priest on the belfry of the place and he was connected by a subterranean telephone with the fort in question. Our people went to take him; he wore his uniform under the cassock; he was shot immediately.' (*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 820, September 19, 1914.)

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"A Protestant officer of Osnabrück wrote, according to the *Osnabrücker Zeitung* of September 5, 1914, as follows:

'The worst *francs-tireurs* (in Belgium) are the people who work under the disguise of the ecclesiastical robe. I make each of these "brothers" take off his hat and examine his tonsure. We have made prisoners of eight of these "brothers" to-day. Not one of them was a priest.'

"In the 'Descriptions' on the subject of Louvain by Lieutenant-Colonel Frobenius in his book *Durch Not und Tod* (Vienna, p. 56) the following appears:

'Officers have been repeatedly discovered who made use of the cassock in order to distribute arms and munitions under the guise of the priest. Thus the Belgian soldier

\* No disguise of this nature on the Belgian side has been brought to our notice. It is, moreover, proper to observe that all the monks who wear the ecclesiastical garb are not necessarily tonsured. This is true, especially, of the Seminarists at the beginning of their studies and the lay brothers of nearly all the orders. Further there exist in Belgium many orders very scattered such as those of the Brothers of the Christian Doctrine, the Brothers of Charity, the Brothers of St. John of God, etc., of which no member wears the tonsure.

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has fallen so low as to insult the ecclesiastical dress and to become a miserable assassin.'

"Other circumstances may have contributed at times to the birth of these suspicions. Thus the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* (No. 965, November 8, 1914) says:

'A soldier H. F. grievously wounded in the neighbourhood of Sedan had been brought in a motor field ambulance to Germany. He had had his eye destroyed by a bullet which was still behind the other eye. He was put in the motor-car without any covering for his head. A French priest saw him, took off his hat and put it on the wounded man to shelter him. The man arrived at Treves with the priest's large hat on and he died there in the seminary. This fact did not prevent the act of mercy from giving birth to accusations against the French and Belgian priests; the imaginative power of various people who saw this astonishing head-dress of the wounded man made them take him for a wounded priest made prisoner as a *franc-tireur*.' "

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*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 268, April 1, 1915.

THE CURÉ, THE MACHINE-GUN, AND THE FAMOUS  
SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGE

"The *Leipziger Neuesten Nachrichten* (No. 291, October 20, 1914) reported the following:

'We crossed Schaffen in marching order; there was a church in the middle of the village; the third battalion halted on the road behind it. We stopped on the near side of it and having piled our arms we were stretched on the pavement. The artillery halted immediately behind us. Five minutes had scarcely passed when a violent machine-gun fire crackled from the summit of the belfry of the church, from two different sides. Through the openings one could distinctly see Belgian uniforms. Finally, we advanced to the assault of the church with the aid of pioneers. We had hardly set foot inside before four pioneers and two riflemen fell mortally wounded. They fired from the belfry upon us in the interior of the church. We rushed forward to the top and found there four armed peasants with the curé. [They had distinctly seen Belgian uniforms! Ed.] The peasants were imme-

## Thematic Motives of the Legends 79

diately shot; the curé was taken prisoner and brought before the captain; he protested his innocence. . . . The villagers afterwards told us that he gave them orders from the pulpit to fire upon the Germans. No alternative was left us but to send this saviour of souls to the other world.'

"It is established, as far as this last point is concerned, that the curé of Schaffen still lives.

"Further on in the same article one reads:

'In front of us was the old fortress of Diest. We suddenly remembered that we had previously seen Belgian soldiers with their machine-guns in the belfry, but we could no longer find any trace of them! We learnt later that the church was connected with the neighbouring fortress by a subterranean passage; the Belgian soldiers had disappeared by this route.'

"The Ministry of War communicated the following on February 27, 1915, to *Informations Pax*:

'Reply to the enclosed letter addressed to General Headquarters and dated October 27, 1914, B. 37.

'We have not found any subterranean passage between the church Saint-Sulpice at Diest and the fortifications of this town. According to the declarations of the inhabitants the Belgian troops had installed an observation post in the belfry of the church.

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'"

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*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 220, March 16,  
1915.

#### CURÉ AND MACHINE-GUN

"At Düsseldorf the rumour spread that the curé of Orchamps, near Neufchâteau, had been shot.<sup>1</sup>

"In company with his sacristan and three other inhabitants of the vicinity he fired with a machine-gun from the belfry of the church upon the German troops who were passing.

"The Ministry of War wrote to the bureau of *Informations Pax* on February 8, 1915:

'Reply to your letter of October 21, 1914, addressed to headquarters and enclosed herewith:

<sup>1</sup> See the denial reproduced on p. 73.

'The story of the man from Düsseldorf according to which the curé of Ochamps (not Orchamps), Belgium, was shot is untrue. The curé Théophile Dujardin is alive to-day; he has exercised his ministry for the last twenty years in this locality.

'By order

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'

"Again the story of the machine-gun and the curé is completely wrong."

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*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 268, April 1, 1915.

ANOTHER FALSE ACCUSATION FROM THE  
"SCHLESISCHE ZEITUNG"

"The same journal (*Schlesische Zeitung*) published in its No. 844, December 2, 1914, a story of the war entitled 'Two Journeys in a Motor-Car in the Conquered Part of France,' by H. von R. Subjoined is an extract:

'A village was completely burnt, the broken walls seemed to stare at us like spectres. This village had been destroyed by the Germans in consequence of the treachery of the inhabitants. Before entering it our

troops had asked the curé of the place if the village was free from French soldiers and he had answered in the affirmative. The regiment advanced without precaution but when the Staff appeared it was riddled with bullets from machine-guns. It was impossible to say whence came this fusillade until at last the guns were found on the church tower. Naturally the curé was shot.'

"*Informations Pax* have received from the Ministry of War in reference to this subject the following comment.

'Enquiry has not confirmed the facts advanced in the article.

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'"

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*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 331, April 23, 1915.

#### STORIES WHICH CANNOT BE CHECKED

"The *Thüringer Monatsblätter* (published by Richter Bros., Editor-in-Chief, Prof. W. Nicolai d'Eisenach) quotes in No. 9, December 1, 1914, p. 149, a soldier's letter which says:

'The bombardment of Longwy commenced to-day. A battery of mortars was placed at the entrance of the village and soon ad-



dressed its brazen salute to the enemy. The inhabitants of H . . . had evacuated this part of their village. The enemy, represented by Turcos and Zouaves, obstinately defended the place foot by foot. By every means, in conjunction with the civilian population, he tried to hold his favourable position. A veritable salvo of fire issued from the houses against our brave troops as they marched to the assault and upon the belfry of M . . . despite the sacred symbol of the Red Cross, machine guns, worked by priests wearing the white brassard of the Red Cross, were placed. Naturally we did not delay in taking vengeance for such unworthy conduct. More numerous machine-guns were brought up under a hail of bullets and at the cost of heavy losses: they mowed down without pity all that was before them. Thus the German guns reaped a harvest, a just harvest, for such a way of carrying on war. The tower was bombarded and at its feet fell the debris of the instrument of death and the almost unrecognizable body of the "minister of God" to whom the Most High had not brought any help.'

"The enquiry revealed nothing. The author of the article has communicated to *Informations*

*Pax* that he had heard the story from a Würtemberg soldier whose name and regiment he did not know.

“The Ministry of War has supplied the following to *Informations Pax*:

‘It appears from the investigation that the affirmations contained in the soldier’s letter are based on accounts which it is impossible to verify.

‘(s) BAUER, WAGNER.’

“The *Thüringer Monatsblätter* had already received a warning from the military authorities as appears from the letter given below:

‘The publisher and editor of the *Thüringer Monatsblätter* are warned in the most definite way to abstain in future from all comment of such a nature as to disturb religious peace: measures are taken to suspend any publication of this character.

‘For the General Commanding,  
‘THE CHIEF OF STAFF.’”

## SECTION 5. MURDERS, POISONINGS, AND MUTILATIONS

Throat cutting—Atrocities in the cellar of a monastery at Louvain—Another unconfirmed rumour—Belgian nuns

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and poisoned food—Poisoning by strychnine—The least has sufficed—Eyes torn out—Yet again eyes torn out—Gouged out eyes—A pail filled with soldiers' eyes—Fingers cut off.

R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, pp. 63 to 65.

### THROAT CUTTING

“The *Wermelskirchener Zeitung* published in its No. 204 of September 1st a soldier's letter containing this statement:

‘Yesterday evening a wounded German of the guard was carried into the village church. After a short interval our battery was ordered to fire on and destroy the village, with the inhabitants, because the curé of the place had cut the throat of the wounded man.’

“The result of the official enquiry was communicated to *Pax* in the following letter:

‘MINISTRY OF WAR,  
‘BERLIN W. 66, December 17, 1914.

‘In reply to your letter of November 17th we have to inform you that the non-commissioned reserve officer Tillmans has declared in the course of his deposition on oath that he had heard from infantry soldiers who passed the story of the curé who had cut the throat

of a wounded man; he had believed it because the locality in question had in fact been bombarded by the artillery. He was not able to state the names of his informants or the regiment to which they belonged. It seems idle in these circumstances to pursue the enquiry.

‘By order,

‘(s) BAUER, WAGNER.’

“One may note how the words ‘our battery received the order’ in the letter became at the enquiry ‘he had heard the story’ and ‘had believed it’ because the place had ‘been bombarded by the artillery.’

“The weekly review *Nach Feierabend* has reproduced a series of soldiers’ letters. No. 43 of 1914 includes the letter No. 9, a note at the head of which says in reference to the writer’s subject: ‘The letter given below (No. 9) was written by a compositor on our staff who instead of rolling a “rotative” is rolling away the red trousers and who, as a military cyclist, mounts a steed of steel.’ The letter runs:

‘The principal agitators and spies in France are the priests. They tell the inhabitants that the Germans will cut their

throats, etc. In this way they have induced many to fire on the German soldiers. A . . . , a priest of this sort, as our column passed, signalled with a flag from the church tower to a French aviator who was flying over. He was arrested. A . . . , another priest, during the night cut the throats of two soldiers of the Landwehr who were sleeping in his house. He has been shot and his house burnt. At A . . . , again, which has for a long time been occupied by the Germans, the burgomaster and the priest have reported to the French our position and strength; a house also in which were wounded Germans has been burnt by the inhabitants. Naturally condemnation followed and the town has been bombarded from end to end.'

"On October 31st, *Pax* demanded from the editor of *Nach Feierabend* the names of the places where the events recorded in the above letter had occurred. On November 25th the demand was repeated.

"This latter application produced the following reply:

'LEIPZIG, November 30, 1914.

'Since *Pax* is trying to interfere with my editorial work I answer in two words that

you are not the forum before which I have to justify myself. Only in consideration of the need for internal peace am I postponing until after the war the denunciation of your attitude and the formal proof of the statements made. If you are not satisfied with this you can take proceedings against me and you are welcome to do so. Your procedure which consists, in the midst of war, in representing as liars the German soldiers who are fighting and dying to save your skin calls for the most energetic reproof.'

"The Prussian Ministry of War writes, in reference to this story:

'MINISTRY OF WAR,  
'BERLIN W. 66, December 18, 1914.

'Reply to your letter of November 25, 1914.

'It appears from the enquiry made that the editor of the weekly review *Nach Feierabend* states his inability to indicate the author of the account since he no longer has in his possession the letter referred to. Further investigation would therefore appear to be useless.

'By order,  
'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'"

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R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, pp. 58 to 60.

### ATROCITIES IN THE CELLAR OF A MONASTERY AT LOUVAIN

"The *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*<sup>1</sup> reports in its issue of August 31, 1914, the following from Rotterdam, dated August 30th.

'A nurse who has arrived in Rotterdam from Louvain has spoken in the latter town with a German officer who gave her the following particulars of the punishment of Louvain. In the early days of the occupation of the town all was quiet, the inhabitants having put away their arms; the German visitors were not molested and were on sufficiently good terms with the population. Subsequently there were found in a cellar the bodies of fifty German soldiers who had apparently been killed by the brothers belonging to the monastery. The occupants of the monastery were arrested and the superior was shot. When he was led out he laughed triumphantly.'

"This horrible fable was quoted in numerous anti-Catholic journals. As it was likely to

<sup>1</sup> See also the *Tägliche Rundschau*, No. 42, August 31, 1914.

revive sectarian bitterness, the General commanding the 7th Army Corps sent the following note to these journals on September 6, 1914:

‘MÜNSTER, September 6, 1914.

‘Vague statements regarding the pretended murders of a large number of German soldiers by monks at Louvain, like those which have recently appeared in a series of journals, make it desirable for me to remind you that such articles, which are calculated to stir up religious or political discord, are forbidden.

‘I insist that this interdict shall be observed in the most rigorous way by journals, and I draw your attention to the consequences of an infraction, as provided by my proclamation of August 27th, II c. No. 2588.

‘FRHR. VON BISSING,

‘*General Commanding.*’

“The *canard* continued its flight and the information bureau of the Catholic press at Frankfurt endeavoured to learn something about it from the German Command at Louvain. The reply was: ‘We know nothing here of this incident. The story is unworthy of belief.’ (*Bayer. Kurier*, No. 269, September 26, 1914.)



“Shortly afterwards *Informations Pax* of Cologne sent a similar enquiry to the Commandant at Louvain and received the following answer:

‘HEADQUARTERS OF THE IMPERIAL GARRISON,  
‘LOUVAIN, October 7, 1914.

‘Reply to your letter of September 29, 1914.

‘It appears that the numerous statements which the journals have reproduced in regard to events at Louvain from August 25 to 27, 1914, are exaggerated out of all proportion and are in part completely imaginary. The article to which you make allusion in your letter belongs to this category.

‘(s) VON THIEL.’

“In spite of all this Major Viktor von Strantz repeats this horrible story in his book: *Die Eroberung Belgiens 1914. Selbsterlebtes. Nach Berichten von Feldzugsteilnehmern zusammengestellt und bearbeitet.*<sup>1</sup>

“Lieutenant-Colonel Hermann Frobenius reproduces this story in his book *Durch Not und Tod* (Vienna, 1914, p. 51), in these terms:

‘The next day brings an extraordinarily revolting history; the bodies of fifty German

<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Köhler, Minden i. W., 1914.

soldiers have been found in a cellar. The crime is attributed to the monks in a monastery; they have been arrested and their superior has already been executed.'

"W. Kotzde also speaks, in his book *Von Lüttich bis Flandern*, of the priests shot at Louvain 'who had taken up arms.'

"In the literary supplement of the *Tägliche Rundschau* of September 3d there is recounted the following:

'When we were inspecting the bridge near Saint-Trond an officer arrived in a motor-car and told us that the town of Louvain was in full insurrection and had been on fire since the previous evening. Ten priests had been shot as promoters of the revolt.' "

\*           \*           \*

*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 247, March 25,  
1915.

#### ANOTHER UNCONFIRMED RUMOUR

"The following rumour was in circulation at Poppenhausen in the neighbourhood of Cassel at the beginning of last December.

'At Vouziers, at the beginning of September, a French priest and a woman, who was

doubtless his housekeeper, were condemned by the military authorities and hanged. This priest had been the curé of a village near Châlons-sur-Marne. He had welcomed into his house thirty-five wounded Germans and had then by means of a telephone in his cellar signalled to the French artillery to open fire upon the house filled with wounded. The propagator of this rumour even pretends that he saw the curé taken from Châlons to Vouziers with some French prisoners and *francs-tireurs*. He saw him hanged from a tree near the barracks in the former locality together with the woman mentioned.'

"On January 19, 1915, the Prussian Ministry of War sent the following communication to the *Pax* bureau:

'In reply to your letter of January 15, 1915 (Akt.-Zeich., F. 51), the Ministry of War informs you that nothing is known of the rumour in question and that, without more precise details, it is impossible to discover anything.

'By order,

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.'

"*Informations Pax* also wrote to the commandant of the 9th mobile transport of the 3d army

at Vouziers and received in reply the following letter:

'In answer to your enquiry of the 2d inst. (F. 51) we have the honour to inform you that the rumour circulated at Poppenhausen, near Cassel, according to which there had been hanged here a French curé and his housekeeper is a pure invention.

'The military tribunal sitting at Vouziers has not up to the present sentenced any one to death.'

" (Seal and signature.) "

\*           \*           \*

*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 429, May 29, 1915.

#### BELGIAN NUNS AND POISONED FOOD

"The *Kaulsdorfer Zeitung*, of Kaulsdorf, published in its No. 137 of November 20, 1914, the following article:

'H. Klinker of Marzahn, municipal functionary of the city of Berlin, who has been campaigning in Belgium with the fusiliers of the guard, has delivered a lively account of his experiences before an association at Friedrichsfeld. . . .

'The end of the article devoted to this account is thus worded. He had received from a comrade the news that a convent of nuns in which were some wounded had been lately razed to the ground and the nuns executed because they had given poisoned food to the wounded Germans.'

"When an enquiry was addressed to the Prussian War Ministry this replied to *Informations Pax*:

'It appears from a public investigation that the rumour to which allusion is made in the article mentioned has reference to a field hospital at Ciney in Belgium. This hospital at Ciney has not, however, been destroyed and no attempt at poisoning took place there.

'(s) BAUER, WAGNER.' "

\* \* \*

R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, pp. 17 and 18.

### POISONING BY STRYCHNINE

"On September 18, 1914, the *Schwarzwälder Chronik* appearing at Hornberg in the Black Forest district of Baden published the following article:

'We have had brought to us for notice a letter from the front written by H. Adolf Fr. Schmidt, son of Ad. Fr. Schmidt, a merchant in this town, to his parents. According to this letter H. Schmidt was stationed as a non-commissioned officer with thirty-six men, at the beginning of the month, in the presbytery of a French locality near the Vosges (the names of localities are not allowed to be published). The priest approached our soldiers with so much affability that his attitude aroused the suspicions of the head of a detachment. The priest caused coffee to be prepared for all the men, but before drinking it, H. Schmidt took a little of it to taste and at once discovered that something had been mixed with it. This was immediately reported and an examination by a military doctor showed that the coffee had had strychnine put into it.

'On the following day the priest and the cook received the punishment which they had well deserved; they were both executed before the door of the church.'

"The episcopal ordinary of Fribourg wrote to the military authorities in order to obtain more precise details. He received the following answer:

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'HEADQUARTERS, 14TH ARMY CORPS,  
'WINGLES (FRANCE), October 28, 1914.

'In response to the letter No. 11031/11257 of the 5th inst., addressed to the General commanding the 14th Army Corps and delivered here, we have the honour to inform you that the non-commissioned officer Adolf Schmidt of the 3d transport column originally of Hornberg (Baden) has completely retracted the statements made by him in a letter written to his parents and published in No. 146 of the *Schwarzwälder Chronik* of September 18, 1914, in reference to an attempt at poisoning by, and the execution of, a French Catholic priest, since these statements are false.

'For the General Commanding,  
'COLONEL VON BRAUCHITSCH,  
'*Chief of the Headquarters Staff.*'

\* \* \*

*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 220, March 16,  
1915.

EVEN LESS WOULD HAVE SUFFICED

"The *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* of September 18, 1914, No. 226, B., has published a letter from the front which, according to the editor,

was printed in the *Cuxhavener Zeitung*. Among different stories of atrocities this appears prominently:

‘Another thing: we passed through a village. Suddenly before us there were cries of anger. The French had captured a German soldier, had cut off his head and had nailed it to the door of a barn. They were French peasants under the guidance of their curé. For this offence the village was burnt; the male inhabitants with the curé were arrested and given a deserved punishment. I could tell you of many incidents like this illustrating the cruelty and brutality of the French but this will suffice.’

“In reference to this letter *Informations Pax* received on February 15, 1915, the following communication from the Prussian War Ministry:

‘The enquiry made has not confirmed the contents of the letter in question.

‘By order,

‘(s) BAUER, WAGNER.’”

\* \* \*



R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügegeist*, pp. 11 to 15.

### EYES TORN OUT

"Without doubt among the millions of men engaged on one side or the other in the war there are some who, under a human disguise, are veritable beasts. In war time one may expect to find them at their worst. They are even capable of tearing out the eyes of wounded enemies.

"Privy Councillor Küttner (Breslau) has reported in the course of September, 1914, seven instances of such mutilation. A telegraphic agency communicated on October 1, 1914, the following information:

'A superior officer of the Bavarians writes from the front to the *München-Ausburger Abendzeitung*: "To the south of Cambrai a column of German automobiles was attacked by a French cyclist detachment. Most of the escort fell and the vehicles were burnt. When the German patrols rejoined the rest of the column later they affirmed that the eyes of the dead Germans had been torn out.'"

"Did the German patrol indeed see this? Have they really made such a statement?

It is impossible to say with certainty. One thing is clear: it is that this theme of eyes torn out has given rise to a veritable nightmare of atrocities. An innumerable quantity of similar horrible stories have been recounted, propagated, and, finally, accepted as absolutely certain: and yet they are all fables. Here is some evidence in support of this contention.

“The editor of the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, on September 26, 1914, applied to Dr. Kaufmann, canon at Aix-la-Chapelle, for information about the following case:

‘It has been stated as a matter of fact, to ladies connected with the chief railway station at Cologne, that in a field hospital at Aix-la-Chapelle an entire room was filled with wounded who had had their eyes torn out in Belgium.’

“The reply of Canon Kaufmann, dated September 28th, runs thus:

‘As regards the statement you speak of, I at once consulted the official authorities. I send you the evidence of the chief medical officer of a field hospital here, a celebrated oculist whom I have consulted simply because he is an oculist. He writes to me:

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"In no field hospital at Aix-la-Chapelle is there a room filled with wounded whose eyes have been removed. To my knowledge there has been absolutely no case of this kind at Aix-la-Chapelle." (Kölnische Volkszeitung, No. 852, September 30, 1914.)

"The second fact is dated October 2, 1914. It has reference to events of the month of September. Here it is:

'Canon A . . . came to us recently and told us this story. In the field hospital of the Franciscan sisters of S . . . , of whom he is the superior, a wounded German officer of reserve told him that he had been informed that in the convent Bl . . . near V . . . in Holland, which had been converted into a hospital, there were twenty-two wounded Germans whose eyes had been removed by the Belgians. It was easy for us to submit these statements to the superior who was personally known to us. She at once informed us that the convent at Bl . . . had never been used as a hospital.'

"Notwithstanding this contradiction a soldier shortly afterwards told the following story at an inn near Aix-la-Chapelle:

“I have myself visited the eye clinic at Stephanstrasse, Aix-la-Chapelle. A sister took me into a dark room hung with black, called the room of the dead. There were in it twenty-eight soldiers whose eyes had been torn out. When I entered they cried out with anger and misery: ‘Kill us if you are our comrade.’”

‘Other soldiers confirmed this story.

‘One of those present who decided to investigate the matter reports: “On Monday, October 19th, I called on the director of the clinic in question, Dr. Vüllers. ‘Certainly,’ he said to me, ‘I will show you this sad room.’ He opened the door of a ward, the patients appeared quite happy. We visited a second and a third ward.

““Has any one a complaint to make?”

““No, Doctor!”

““At last a door was opened. Shaded light, black curtains! A switch was touched and the electric light turned on.

““Does that distress anybody’s eyes?”

““No, Doctor!”

““Did you have your eyes torn out in Belgium?”

““The wounded burst into laughter.

““In this way we traversed all the wards. There was much misery and woe in many of

them but the cases in which both eyes had been lost were altogether exceptional.

““‘You see!’ the amiable doctor in charge said to me. ‘If you wish to publish what you have seen you may say that neither my colleague Dr. Thier nor myself has, so far, treated a single soldier who has had his eyes torn out.’”” (*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 931, October 28, 1914.)

“From Aix-la-Chapelle the legend emigrated to Bonn.

“An article in the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* of October 25, 1914, runs thus:

‘I was told recently that there were in the clinic for eye diseases twenty to thirty German soldiers whose eyes had been torn out in Belgium. The person who told me this said he had himself seen a man blinded in this fashion who was kept in a darkened room.

‘I had grave doubts as to the accuracy of this statement, and I therefore wrote to the administrative department of the clinic for eye diseases at Bonn. I have just received from the chief surgeon there the following letter:

““In answer to your enquiry of the 13th inst. I hasten to inform you that I have not

so far seen any blind persons whose eyes had been torn out in Belgium. I have, however, seen many who, in consequence of wounds produced by bullets or shell, have lost their sight. The story which has been told you is a fable.

“PROF. KUHN,  
“*Privy Medical Councillor.*”

“Then the legend reached the upper Danube. On November 5th someone wrote from this region to the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*:

‘It is said in this neighbourhood that a wounded soldier of the Landwehr who is at the hospital of Sigmaringen had had his eyes torn out and his nose and ears cut off in Belgium. The man’s wife wished to see him, but the superior medical officer and the sister of charity dissuaded her saying that her husband was very grievously wounded. Notwithstanding this she persisted. When she was taken into the room and had seen the horrible mutilation inflicted on her husband she fell dead at the foot of the bed.

‘I immediately applied to a priest of my acquaintance, who is almoner to the hospital, for information and received the following reply:

“‘The whole story is imaginary, there is not a word of truth in it.’” (*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 970, November 10, 1914.)

“In view of the assertion of the Norwegian medical man Dr. Saethre (*Hospital Impressions in Germany*) that he had personally seen at Aix-la-Chapelle a Red Cross nurse whose breasts had been cut off by *francs-tireurs* and a cavalry captain who had had an eye torn out while he lay wounded on the battlefield, a well-known oculist, who is at the head of the reserve hospital No. 1 at Aix-la-Chapelle, declared on November 25, 1914:

‘The atrocities in question have no foundation in fact, as far as Aix-la-Chapelle is concerned. There is here neither a Red Cross sister whose breasts have been cut off by *francs-tireurs* nor cavalry captain who has had an eye torn out.’ (*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 1022, November 27, 1914.)

“On October 18th the *Weser-Zeitung* of Bremen reproduced in its No. 24434 an article by a Norwegian medical man, Dr. Holmboe, entitled: ‘In the Military Hospitals of Berlin.’ It included the following:

'There is at Potsdam a special hospital for soldiers wounded by *francs-tireurs*: among others, officers whose eyes have been torn out. According to the general opinion these crimes have been committed by young Belgian girls of fourteen or fifteen, at the instigation of Catholic priests.'

"The Commandant at Potsdam writes in reference to this to *Informations Pax*:

'HEADQUARTERS AT POTSDAM,

'No. 1989,

'POTSDAM, October 31, 1914.

'There is no special hospital for soldiers wounded by *francs-tireurs* here, nor are there any officers whose eyes have been torn out. The Commandant has taken steps in case the article referred to should appear in other journals.'"

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*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 1022, November 27,  
1914.

#### YET AGAIN EYES TORN OUT<sup>1</sup>

"The following letter has been sent to us:

'AIX-LA-CHAPELLE, November 26, 1914.

'DEAR SIR:

'One of the most ungrateful tasks of the

<sup>1</sup> This article is the one from which a passage is cited on p. 105.



present time is to try to secure the triumph of truth over inaccurate rumour.

'I informed you, on the strength of an official enquiry, in a letter published by the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* (No. 852, September 30, 1914) that not a single case of gouging out of eyes had been met with in the thirty-five hospitals at Aix-la-Chapelle. You have told me, however, that notwithstanding, rumours still circulate, and have communicated to me, as proof, an article in the *Kölnische Zeitung* of October 11th, No. 1192, which is calculated to supply fresh material for lying stories.

'I refer to the article in the *Trondhjems Adresseavis* entitled "A Norwegian Doctor in the Hospitals of Cologne" in which Dr. Saethre, of Drontheim, has recorded his impressions of the German hospitals. The doctor's exposition is translated literally in the article. According to the *Kölnische Zeitung* it contains the following:

"As regards the atrocities by *francs-tireurs* there is no doubt that such occurred. I have myself seen—not at Cologne, it is true, but at Aix-la-Chapelle—a sister of the Red Cross whose breasts had been cut off by *francs-tireurs*; I also saw a captain of

cavalry who had had an eye torn out as he lay wounded on the battlefield."

'You have asked my advice in regard to this article in the *Kölnische Zeitung*. I have therefore applied again to the official authorities, I hope for the last time. I have asked to have the point cleared up whether or not the cases mentioned by Dr. Saethre were really in the hospitals of Aix-la-Chapelle.

'I willingly communicate to you the result of these new researches.

'The famous oculist, who is chief medical officer of the reserve hospital No. 1, writes to me as follows, on the 25th inst.

"The atrocities in question have no foundation as far as Aix-la-Chapelle is concerned. There has been here neither Red Cross sister whose breasts had been cut off by *francs-tireurs* nor captain in the cavalry whose eyes had been gouged out."

'I cannot imagine where the Norwegian doctor derived his information; at any rate it is established that, up to this date, there has not been in our hospitals at Aix-la-Chapelle a single case in which the eyes had been torn out.

'Nothing is known here, either, in competent medical circles, of the other case, that

of the Red Cross sister whom Dr. Saethre pretends to have seen at Aix-la-Chapelle.

‘DR. FR. KAUFMANN,  
‘Canon.’”

\* \* \*

*Vorwärts*, October 22, 1914.

#### GOUGED OUT EYES

“We have already been able to establish the falsity of a great number of statements, made with much precision and widely circulated in the press, in regard to pretended cruelties which had been committed by the population of countries with which Germany is at war, against German soldiers and civilians. We are able to-day to put an end to two more of these fantastic accounts.

“The war correspondent of the *Berliner Tageblatt* spoke, some weeks ago, of cigars and cigarettes filled with gunpowder which had been sold or given to our soldiers with diabolical intent. He even pretended that he had himself seen hundreds of cigarettes of this kind. We are assured from an authorized source, that these stories of cigars and cigarettes are no more than audacious fantasies.

"Again stories of soldiers whose eyes have been gouged out by *francs-tireurs* circulate throughout Germany, but not a single case of this kind has been officially confirmed. So far every time that it has been possible to investigate a case its inaccuracy has been established.

"It is of little consequence that rumours of this kind may have an appearance of truth or may even be supported by 'eyewitnesses.' The desire to attract notice, lack of criticism, and the personal equation play, in these days which we are passing through, an unhappy rôle. Every nose carried away or simply bandaged, every eye removed, is immediately transformed into a nose or an eye carried off by the *francs-tireurs*. Already the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* has been able, contrary to very precise assertions at Aix-la-Chapelle, to establish that no soldier with eyes gouged out has been found in the hospitals of that town. It was said also that wounded cases of this kind were being nursed in the neighbourhood of Berlin, but wherever the search into the subject of these rumours has been made their entire inanity has been shown. Finally, these rumours con-

centrated upon Gross-Lichterfelde; a morning paper with a large circulation in Berlin printed in large type a statement to the effect that in a hospital at Lichterfelde there were ten slightly wounded German soldiers whose eyes had been removed by criminal hands. On enquiry by our comrade Liebknecht the following reply from the senior medical officer of the hospital, dated the 18th of this month, was received:

‘HONOURED SIR:

‘Happily there is no truth in these rumours.

‘PROF. RAUTENBERG.’

“Here is further evidence that in our day one must arm oneself with a triple cuirass of scepticism in regard to news of this kind in whatever journal it may appear and never forget that abroad the same pretended atrocities are reported almost word for word and credited to German soldiers and civilians just as in Germany they are attributed to the soldiers and civilians of other Powers.”

\* \* \*

“On December 6th, *Vorwärts* published the results of an enquiry made in the hospitals of

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Hanover and at the great Charity Hospital at Berlin.

"The director of the Hanover hospitals wrote to the socialist paper the following reply:

'After enquiry among the doctors of the different sections of hospital No. 3, we are in a position to inform you that we have not now and have never had in the hospital any case of a wounded soldier whose eyes had been gouged out.'

"Similarly the Charity Hospital at Berlin communicated this note:

'The Charity Hospital has had no cases of wounded whose eyes had been torn out.' "

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R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügegeist*, p. 16.

### A PAIL FILLED WITH SOLDIERS' EYES

"The *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, October 3d, 1914, publishes the following letter from Aix-la-Chapelle.

'I have been told positively that there are in the hospital of Forst near Aix-la-Chapelle forty-two soldiers with eyes gouged out.

Upon enquiry the fact was denied by the sisters. The same day I was told that a young boy of ten years who was carrying a pail filled with the eyes of soldiers had been surprised on a Belgian battlefield; he had been captured in the act of committing his abominable crime. When I protested that the thing was impossible; that our ambulance column would have noticed it at once; that proof ought to be given; the sole response was an embarrassed silence. Some weeks before I had heard it said that there was in the hospital at N . . . , a sister of charity whose right hand had been cut off by a *franc-tireur*. I made personal enquiry from the superior and was told that nothing of the sort had happened to any sister.' ”

\* \* \*

R. P. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist*, pp. 19 to 22.

#### FINGERS CUT OFF

“The newspapers of Berlin have published an article about the prisoners’ camp at Münster. It runs:

‘There are also a great number of Belgian civilians detained here as prisoners. They are the brutes who fired from the houses

upon our unsuspecting troops and who, before the arrival of the German soldiers, committed all sorts of cruelties upon German civilians. When they arrived at Münster there were even found upon these inhuman beings fingers which they had cut away with rings upon them. 'Some of these prisoners tried unsuccessfully to escape while on the way from the station to the camp. These Belgians, among whom there is an astonishing number of priests, will soon receive a just punishment. Military law has already condemned to death from twenty to thirty.'

"*Informations Pax* applied, in reference to this account, to the Headquarters of the camp at Münster, and received the following answer:

'The assertion of a Belgian journal, according to which there were found on civilian prisoners in the camp at Münster fingers which had been cut off, is false. No sentence of death has been pronounced by military law against prisoners detained in the camp, neither against Catholic priests, civilians, or soldiers. What is true is that more than one hundred women and children have been sent back to their homes. Nobody need doubt that the heads of our army will act



with the most rigorous equity, nor that they also condemn with the greatest rigour false information of this sort.

‘(s) FRIEDR. UNVERSEHRT.

‘Vicar, almoner designated by the military authority for the Catholic German troops of the guard and the Catholic prisoners of war in the camp of Münster.’

“In regard to the same affairs the priest Hardinghaus of Bremen received the following reply:

‘The rumours circulated about atrocities committed by the Belgian priests interned in the camp at Münster upon German soldiers are false. It is equally false that three Belgian priests have already been shot and that others are being kept under arrest because the charges against them have not been substantiated. There is no particular charge against any of the priests. The only thing which is correct is that a revolt took place in a barracks in the camp where there were four priests, who did not, however, take part in the disturbance.

‘The General Commanding,

‘(s) VON LINDE-SUDEN.’

(*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 880, Oct. 10, 1914.)

"An article on the war in the review *Zeit im Bild* (Pass und Gerleb, Berlin) is entitled 'On the Road to Brussels.' The following extract refers to Liège:

'In the course of the removal of the dead and wounded from the battlefield before the forts the shocking observation was made that many of the inhabitants had committed absolutely bestial acts upon our wounded. Not only had fingers been cut off in order to obtain rings but the men had been mutilated in a way which is impossible to describe. When the houses were entered in the search for arms, rings which had belonged to our soldiers were found on both men and women: in one case a priest was wearing round his neck a number of rings strung on a cord. These inhuman beings were made prisoners and conducted to the fort of Chartreuse. They are all condemned to death. Each day some of them are executed. It is impossible to have the least pity for them.'

"The Imperial Government at Liège has written to *Informations Pax* on this subject thus:

'SECTION I d., No. 168.

'LIÈGE, October 23, 1914.

'It is very unlikely that a priest should

have behaved in the way described and nothing is known of it here. The other statements are equally false or exaggerated. Absolutely no execution has taken place here in the fort of Chartreuse.

‘(s) RENNER, LIEUT.-COL.

‘*Chief of the General Staff.*’”

\* \* \*

Such are the different categories of stories of which a rigorous control has established the imaginary character. Most of them, it is seen, have been surprised not far from their origin and have hardly passed the first phases of elaboration. These indeed are the only ones which afford scope for enquiry since the data of place, time, and individuality have not yet been lost and permit of checking. These also present the most favourable opportunities for the study of their genesis. Thus the collection of examples given in the preceding pages offers in this respect a particularly propitious field of study.

## CHAPTER III

### GENESIS OF THE LEGENDS

#### SECTION I. UNCONSCIOUS ERRORS OF OBSERVATION

Experiences of the school of criminology of Prof. v. Liszt and of the Congress of Psychology at Göttingen—Laws governing errors of observation.

THE psychological origin of legends has during recent years been the object of numerous researches, especially in Germany, and the errors which may be made in describing an observed fact have been particularly studied. I will content myself with recalling briefly, by way of example, two of the best known instances. The first may be called "the attempt at murder at Professor v. Liszt's school of criminology."<sup>1</sup>

In the course of a discussion an altercation arose between two members of the school; the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. S. Jaffa, *Beiträge zur Psychologie der Aussage*, B. I., H. I., p. 79.

tone became heated; they proceeded to insults and threats until at last, seizing a revolver, one of the disputants fired upon the other point-blank. Subsequently the members present were called as witnesses. Some of them had written out depositions on the evening of the day on which the incident occurred, others on the following day, others a week afterwards, others three weeks, and yet others five weeks afterwards. All the witnesses were law students in their final year and persons of a certain maturity of judgment. The attempted murder was only an experiment. It had been arranged, without their knowledge, even to the smallest detail. The examination of the witnesses revealed that none of them was entirely correct and that the extent of the errors increased from the moment when, one of the disputants having threatened the other with his fist, the excitement of the spectators had attained its culminating point. The percentage of error increased at this stage from 9.3% to 20.3%, *i. e.*, it was more than doubled.

A second experiment was made at the Congress of Psychology at Göttingen; it is still

more characteristic. Von Gennep tells the story of it in these words<sup>1</sup>:

“Not far from the hall in which the Congress was sitting there was a public fête with a masked ball. Suddenly the door of the hall was thrown open and a clown rushed in madly pursued by a negro, revolver in hand. They stopped in the middle of the room fighting; the clown fell, the negro leapt upon him, fired, and then both rushed out of the hall. The whole incident hardly lasted twenty seconds. The president asked those present to write immediately a report since there was sure to be a judicial enquiry. Forty reports were sent in. Only one had less than 20% of mistakes in regard to the principal facts; fourteen had 20% to 40% of mistakes; twelve from 40% to 50%; thirteen more than 50%. Moreover in twenty-four accounts 10% of the details were pure inventions and this proportion was exceeded in ten accounts and diminished in six. Briefly a quarter of the accounts were false.

“It goes without saying that the whole

<sup>1</sup> A. von Gennep, *La formation des légendes* (Paris, Flammarion, 1910).

scene had been arranged and even photographed in advance. The ten false reports may then be relegated to the category of tales and legends; twenty-four accounts are half legendary, and six have a value approximating to exact evidence" (pp. 158-159).

"Experiments on certainty," observes von Gennep, "lead to analogous results. Witnesses were asked to underline the passages in their accounts to which they would be prepared to swear before a tribunal. It was found there were as many mistakes in the underlined passages as elsewhere. The important point to notice in this connection is that the underlined statements were of the same type as legends: they were objects of belief."

"To sum up, the ratio of true to false descriptions of an extraordinary event is about 5 or 6%; that is to say that fantasy and error are normal even among us and that the tendency to error, both individual and collective, operates from the moment of observation" (p. 160).

Other ingenious researches have been made with a view to measuring precisely the magnitude of these errors; their variations have been

studied with the help of experimental data, and the laws regulating them have been worked out.<sup>\*</sup> The extent of error which the recording of an observed fact exhibits is a function of different variables. It depends on:

(1) The emotional condition of the observer; it increases with the observer's excitement at the moment when the fact occurs.

(2) The particular circumstances which accompany the fact.

(3) Its unfamiliar character.

(4) The predispositions of the spectators in regard to the incident or to the people taking part in it. Whatever their desire to be impartial the spectators will incline unconsciously, in a sense favourable or unfavourable according as

(a) Their attention is directed particularly to one aspect.

(b) They interpret falsely in consequence of characteristics which they have attributed in advance to the authors of the fact.

<sup>\*</sup> These laws have been formulated more particularly by G. Schultz in the *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie*, B. Z., H. 6; see also the study of Dr. Lucy Haesch-Ernst, "*Die Psychologie der Aussage und ihre Beziehung auf die Gegenwart*" (*Internationale Rundschau*, I. Jahrg., H. 1, June, 1915, pp. 15-40).



(5) The time which has elapsed since the observation of the fact; this element becomes appreciable after forty-eight seconds.

These laws are general and the concordant results obtained by different observers do not necessarily establish their accuracy, for this convergence results from similar errors produced in the same circumstances under the influence of the same laws. It would be absurd and unjustifiable to deduce that the observation of a fact can never lead to exact knowledge of it, but it follows from what has been stated above that before being accepted as true a statement as to something seen requires rigorous criticism. The mind, as we have seen, tends to introduce into observed facts errors of which the extent and the number vary according to certain laws. Withdrawn from all criticism and transmitted haphazard accounts of incidents necessarily become a source of legendary propositions.

## SECTION 2. PSYCHOLOGY OF THE GERMAN SOLDIER AT THE OUTSET OF THE CAMPAIGN

- (a) Excitement and powers of discrimination during the course of military operations.

- (b) Predispositions in reference to the Belgian population—Bias as to *francs-tireurs*—Survival of the memory of 1870 in popular literature and in the military manuals—Application of this recollection to the prospect of a war in Belgium—Conversion of subjective representations into real ones—Official notifications from 9th to 14th August, 1914, in regard to *francs-tireurs*—Atmosphere of excitement and feverishness in which the military mobilization was carried out—Spirit of mistrust and hatred in the ranks of the army.

The experiment of the Congress at Göttingen furnishes an excellent basis of comparison for the study of soldiers' stories. The witnesses concerned were selected persons, psychologists and doctors, all scientific men accustomed to careful observation, trained to control their thoughts and competent to express these in precise terms.

As passive observers of the facts they were not directly concerned in them and they had no bias in one direction rather than another. The conditions involved a simplicity approaching the ideal, they introduced two personalities easy to distinguish—a white clown and a black negro—and the reports on the incident were at once committed to writing. If one compares with this state of things the conditions of a campaign one will be forced to admit the greatly

increased probability of error. The soldiers are men of little cultivation, credulous and prone to emotionalism. Lacking the critical spirit they cannot control their thoughts, or the terms in which they express them.

Mobilization roughly changed their ordinary routine of life and precipitated them from a humdrum existence into circumstances of danger. Is not such a reversal of ordinary experience, such a chaos of extraordinary events and novel impressions calculated to excite the imagination and derange the sense of reality? By degrees, no doubt, they become accustomed to danger and their nerves settle down, but it is exactly at the commencement of hostilities, at the moment when the soldiers are receiving their baptism of fire and the course of events causes a maximum of agitation, that the greater part of these legendary stories come into existence. The soldiers are not merely spectators of, but actors in, the drama.

Penetrating into a village which they believe empty of enemies they find bullets whistling about them and they seek cover to right and

left. Before them there is nothing to be seen but the deserted street and houses with closed doors and displaying no signs of habitation. And still the bullets whistle and their comrades fall. This hidden enemy, these blows which they are unable to return, this menace which they feel on all sides as a blind man the darkness, their ignorance of its source, the idea of betrayal everywhere spread abroad, the death which overtakes them, all contribute to create an atmosphere of anxiety calculated to disturb the bravest. Exposed to this violent agitation their faculties of perception and attention are almost completely abolished. At such a time they are extremely impressionable and their reason exercises no control. Imagination figures a mysterious aggressor and accepting the most improbable hypotheses welcomes them as equivalent to certainty.

This is a commonplace example. In the period preceding the shock of battle patrols reconnoitre the country in advance of the army, perhaps travelling considerable distances. Sometimes by a detour they may penetrate behind the enemy's line, they may discover

columns unsuspecting of their presence, or stumble unexpectedly upon an enemy patrol. It is a period pregnant with the unforeseen, with surprises and ambushes. To such circumstances, which are common to all wars and to all armies, must be added others peculiar to the early stages of a German invasion of Belgium. The first German troops which crossed the Belgian frontier were ignorant of the threatening note which on August 2d was sent by Germany to Belgium; further they had no knowledge of the categorical refusal which had been given to this note nor of the letter of the German ambassador at Brussels, dated 6 A.M., of August 4th, in which it was stated that the German army would, if necessary, force its way through. These troops did not know of the determination of the Belgian people "to repulse by every means in its power any attempt upon its rights" and the resolution of its army to oppose to the invader the most vigorous resistance. On the contrary they carried with them a proclamation to the Belgian people which they were to distribute on their journey. This proclamation, signed by General

v. Emmich, Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Meuse, ran as follows:

TO THE BELGIAN PEOPLE

"It is to my great regret that the German troops are compelled to cross the frontier of Belgium. They are acting under the constraint of an inevitable necessity, the neutrality of Belgium having been already violated by French officers, who, disguised, have traversed Belgian territory in an automobile in order to reach Germany.

"Belgians! it is our greatest desire that means may be found to avoid a combat between two peoples who up to the present have been friends and formerly were allies. Remember the glorious day of Waterloo when the German armies helped to found and establish the independence and prosperity of your country.

"But an open road is necessary to us. Destruction of bridges, tunnels, or railways must be regarded as hostile actions. Belgians! the choice is with you.

"I hope that the German army will not be driven to fighting with you. We only desire a free passage to attack those who wish to attack us. I give formal guarantees to

the Belgian people that they shall suffer nothing of the horrors of war; that we will pay in gold for what we take, and that our soldiers will show themselves the best friends of a people whom we hold in the highest esteem and with whom we have the utmost sympathy.

"It rests with your wisdom and well-reasoned patriotism to avert from your country the horrors of wa

"THE GENERAL COMMANDING-IN-CHIEF  
OF THE ARMY OF THE MEUSE."

This appeal displays towards Belgium a friendly tone. It speaks of the battle of Waterloo where Germans and Belgians fought side by side and where the former contributed to founding the independence of Belgium. It promises to the Belgians that if they will offer no resistance to the Germans, the latter will show themselves "the best friends of a people for whom they have the greatest esteem and sympathy."

This proclamation, which the troops were ordered to distribute, would tend to confirm them in the view that they would meet with no hostility. But as soon as they entered

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Belgian territory the Belgian troops posted on the frontier but concealed by the topographical features of the country welcomed them with a lively fusillade. A feeling of anger naturally associated itself with the first surprise of the German soldiers. Who had fired upon them? It could only be the civilian population! Moreover, the advanced Belgian detachments retired, and as they fell back they continued to harass the Germans by means of ambushes.

Such indeed was an essential characteristic of the operations in Belgium during the period of invasion. Recognizing the enormous numerical inferiority of his forces the Belgian commander had deliberately adopted tactics which, while delaying the enemy as much as possible by rear-guard actions, avoided by a progressive withdrawal an engagement in which the Belgian troops would be likely to be destroyed.

Small contingents were sent in advance and dispersed themselves widely through the country. Composed usually of a few cyclists, they possessed extreme mobility. They pursued a veritable guerilla warfare, annoying the adversary, surprising his patrols, threatening his



communications, and leaving him in doubt as to the strength of the Belgian forces and of their intentions.

Arrived at an advanced post the men would conceal themselves in the outskirts of a village or in the outbuildings of a farm, behind walls and hedges and in barns. When a detachment of the enemy appeared they would fire rapidly several volleys and then be lost to sight in a country where every path was familiar to them. Surprised, the German patrol, or advance guard, would make a precipitate retreat, abandoning dead and wounded. When the main body advanced to the attack in order to force a passage, all trace of the enemy had vanished. Nobody was to be found in the region of the ambush except a few villagers and peasants, perhaps collected about the victims and incapable of explaining in their primitive speech what had taken place, whom the circumstances conspired to render suspect.

The Flemish writer Styn Streuvels has noted in his journal of the war many incidents of this kind. His evidence, which has been frequently quoted with approval in the German press, is

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not lacking in authority. The *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (June 4, 1915, 1st edition), for example, calls him "a faithful servant of the truth" and describes him as one of those "who, although they belong to an enemy country, do not let their heads be turned by lying stories of atrocities but trust their own observations."<sup>1</sup>

During September, 1914, several skirmishes occurred in the immediate neighbourhood of his village so that he was able to subject them to a personal enquiry.

"At Vive Saint-Eloy, near Waereghem," he writes, "a company of fifty volunteers, *i. e.*, voluntary soldiers, enlisted for the duration of the war and belonging to troops of the line in the regular army, hid themselves in an unoccupied house on the Ghent road. As some German patrols passed at a distance of a hundred metres the volunteers fired—prematurely, as usual, and . . . a horse was killed.

<sup>1</sup> Quotations from Styn Streuvels' book on the war and similar laudatory notices of it may be found in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (March 21, 1915); the *Vossische Zeitung* (No. 212, April 27, 1915); *Vorwärts* (May 1, 1915); and the *Kölnische Zeitung* (No. 552, June 2, 1915), etc.

"Note the consequences! The Germans had been attacked: they had seen no soldiers,<sup>1</sup> therefore it was civilians who had fired. A battalion arrived and Waereghem was bombarded."<sup>2</sup>

At Deerlyk on September 8, 1914, there was a similar case; volunteers assailed a detachment of Uhlans without showing themselves.

"On the 10th," continues Styn Streuvels, "more Germans appeared. The volunteers fired from a fir wood by the side of the road. Instead of running away, as these young soldiers expected, the Germans rushed toward the wood. The volunteers withdrew behind the little wood and took refuge in a farm. The Germans, again, did not see any uniforms, but on coming out of the wood they noticed some peasants, who, leaving their work, fled precipitately towards a farm situated in a direction opposite to that in which the volunteers had retired.

<sup>1</sup> The Flemish text runs: "Zy hebben geen soldaten gezien." The German papers in reproducing this passage (see particularly the *Vossische Zeitung*, No. 212, April 27, 1915) have translated it erroneously and maliciously: "There were no soldiers there." (Cf. *Cahiers Documentaires*, livr. xxx., p. 6.)

<sup>2</sup> In *Oorlogstyd*, September, 1914. *Uit het dagboek van Styn Streuvels*. Amsterdam, L. J. Veen, p. 48.

"The first was near the main road, the other near an old Roman road—close by the spot where the two roads converged. It was natural that the peasants should be suspected of having been the aggressors. The farm to which they had gone was ransacked, the son of the farmer was put to death, another civilian was wounded, and the farm with its barn and ricks, as well as the adjacent farms, were burnt. The farm near the main road, where the volunteers were concealed, did not sustain any damage, because nobody had any idea that soldiers were concerned in the incident."<sup>1</sup>

These three examples, collected at intervals of some days by Styn Streuvels, in the vicinity of his village, will give an idea of the frequency of these skirmishes during the early weeks of the war. The German troops being thus incessantly harassed by an elusive enemy developed the nervousness inseparable from their anxiety about the dangers to which they were subjected.

If one considers the case of an engagement with an enemy in the open the soldier's faculty

<sup>1</sup> Styn Streuvels, *loc. cit.*, pp. 48 and 49.

of calm judgment is no less likely to be interfered with. The violent impressions, the brusque shocks, the tumult of the combat, all tend to discompose his mind and impair his recognition of realities.

"At this time," writes a German stretcher-bearer after having participated in the earliest fights around Liège, "the soldier finds himself in a state of complete mental perturbation."<sup>1</sup>

He is, so to speak, in a dream; he is not master of himself but acts under the influence of an impulse which dominates him; he has, in a measure, lost his personality. He comes to himself and awakens to reality only when all is finished.

The impressions which the men receive are at the time violent and disordered. They are those of a dream except that they are more vivid and remain in the memory. They belong to a domain where fantasy and reality mix without reason being able to separate them again.

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<sup>1</sup> *Aus den Kämpfen um Lüttich von einem Sanitätssoldaten.* Berlin, S. Fischer Verlag, 1915, p. 25.

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The extent of error in an observed fact is, as we have seen, a function of yet other variables; thus it depends on the prepossessions of the witnesses. The reality of war profoundly affects in this respect the conditions of experience.

At Göttingen the members of the Congress were neutral as regards the scene unrolled before them; they had no preference, either for the clown pursued or for the negro aggressor; they had no pre-established opinion one way or the other. In war the position is altogether different. The belligerents have not entered upon the campaign in a mood of indifference, but, on the contrary, with souls charged with hostile passions. If one scrutinizes in particular the thoughts of the German soldier one is impressed by the fixed ideas, the ready-made opinions, which one finds there and which dispose his judgment in a sense determined in advance. His psychology is controlled by the influence of a special type of education and by the ideas current in his sphere of life.

Of one of these ideas the influence could not fail to be profound. There was in the breasts of the German people a lively recollection of the

surprises and ambushes with which the French *francs-tireurs* had harassed the German army in 1870. This recollection had survived as that of a peril which, coming without warning upon the unsuspecting soldier, left him no moment of security; as one of traitorous enterprises to which regular troops are constantly exposed in an enemy country; as one of a danger the more formidable because it could not be guarded against.

Legendary developments were born of these conditions and, crystallized in an abundant popular literature, were disseminated throughout Germany.

The army, the principal source of them, was also the most completely impregnated with them. These episodes of the last campaign were too vivid not to have made a strong impression in the ranks. They were the basis of teachings with which military instruction was permeated. The manuals in use, founded on the experiences of 1870, were full of the operations of the *francs-tireurs* and dealt with them as probabilities of future wars for which it was necessary to be prepared.

*L'interprète militaire* of Captain von Scharfenort is assuredly one of the best known of them.<sup>1</sup> Its author is professor and librarian in the Berlin Academy; the second edition was published in 1906, eight years before the war. Recommended as a text-book for the examination for military interpreters, its use was also indicated in the case of hostilities in a French-speaking country. It consists of 225 propositions relating to the most diverse eventualities of war: violations of the rights of peoples, sieges and bombardments, capitulations, prisoners, requisitions, acts of hostility, hostages, etc. The majority of the officers, and even of the non-commissioned officers and soldiers, probably had copies of it in their haversacks when, at the beginning of the war, they penetrated into Belgium. This manual was too precious not to be continually in use. At the same time that it furnished formulas useful in their rela-

<sup>1</sup> *L'interprète militaire. Zum Gebrauch in Feindesland sowie behufs Vorbereitung für die Dolmetscherprüfung mit den Lösungen der schwierigen Texte aus "225 deutsche Aufgaben, u.s.w."* Zum Selbstunterricht, 2. völlig umgearbeitete Ausgabe. Zusammengestellt von Scharfenort, Professor, Bibliothekar der Kriegsakademie, Hauptmann, a. D. (Berlin, Verlag von A. Bath, 1906).



tions with the inhabitants or the authorities of the invaded countries it also served to remind them of the rules of warfare. Thus it enumerated the chief characteristics of the conception which the German army had of the operations of *francs-tireurs*.

The chapter on the rights of peoples, for example, sets forth these propositions:

“*Francs-tireurs*:—envenom warfare; threaten lines of communication; hamper the offensive march of the enemy, causing him anxiety in regard to his convoys; devote themselves to minor operations (foolish and always sterile proceedings); expend themselves uselessly; the management of these troops is a very difficult task” (p. 12).

Many of these terms such as “envenom warfare,” “disturb the enemy’s convoys,” “foolish enterprises” reveal truthfully the characters of the treacherous surprises and the permanent menace which the operations of the *francs-tireurs* had acquired in the eyes of the German army and the rigour with which the German soldiery tried to repress these activities.

Captain von Scharfenort does not confine himself to this definition. He gives an example from the campaign of 1814.

“ ‘It is with much regret,’ wrote York on January 31, 1814, ‘that I speak of the wicked conduct of some peasants in the neighbourhood of the town of Saint-Dizier who, excited by perfidious councils, have fired upon our troops ’ ” (p. 33).

The author of *L'interprète militaire* then recalls the steps taken to repress these acts and hinder a repetition of them. “The *francs-tireurs* are outlawed and shot when taken” (p. 43). “Demand,” he says further on, “that the mayor be held responsible for giving notice of the approach of hostile bands ” (p. 136).

The manual contains a collection of notes on means to be used in the eventuality of an attack by *francs-tireurs*. Such include proclamations to the populace and letters to the authorities. Here are some extracts:

“As many assassinations have been committed by *francs-tireurs* hidden in the woods of the neighbourhood I order as follows:

"(1) Any individual met with in the woods and forests will be regarded as a *franc-tireur* and treated accordingly, etc. . . ." (p. 51).

Correspondence with the commandant of a besieged town:

"SIR,

"I have the honour to reply to your letter of yesterday, stating that your instructions do not permit you to deal with military matters, that in the existing circumstances this attitude cannot be accepted.

"I would not dwell particularly on this matter if it was not admitted on all sides that the citizens of S . . . are taking part in the war as *francs-tireurs*. This alters the whole position as far as I am concerned. I have now not only the right but the duty of attacking the citizens of S . . . , a thing I would willingly have avoided in the interests of humanity.

"Moreover, I have the honour to inform you that according to the instructions given me the *francs-tireurs* will not be treated as soldiers but judged according to the laws of war.

"I ask you to advise the citizens to this effect. If they, under the impression that

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they are raising the siege, begin to attack my troops they must realize that in so doing they will cause the ruin of the town and their own destruction." (Pp. 75-76.)

Another example:

"Noted the report sent to me by . . . from which it appears that on the 4th of this month a detachment of the 36th Dragoons, while entering the village of G . . . to levy contributions, was assailed by *francs-tireurs* concealed in the village.

"Noted that the mayor not only failed to warn the detachment of the presence of this band but even led it into the ambush." (P. 132.)

Again:

"On the 1st October the gendarmes stationed at A . . . were attacked by *francs-tireurs*. One gendarme was killed, another wounded, and six others taken prisoners. There was no doubt of the complicity of the inhabitants of these communes and the commandant has taken the most energetic measures to make the commune concern itself with the security of German officials. . . ." (P. 139.)

These few examples suffice to show that the manuals in use in the German army perpetuate the memory of the *francs-tireurs* of 1870. More, they show that this memory has served as the point of departure in the elaboration of a veritable military doctrine. The operations of *francs-tireurs* appear there clothed with a singular importance; they almost constitute a definite category of hostilities, as one of the principal difficulties which beset the movements of an army in an enemy country. They are defined by their own special characteristics—they do not conform to the scientific principles of warfare; they are “foolish enterprises” and “irrational,” but they nevertheless complicate considerably the task of the regular troops; they are committed by turbulent persons “excited by perfidious ‘counsels’ and hidden in woods,” who assail isolated detachments; or by citizens of a besieged town, who take part in its defence. Finally, rules have been established for the repression of these acts; “the *francs-tireurs* are outlawed and shot when they are captured.” The inhabitants of villages are required to warn the authorities of the

presence of hostile bands; they are collectively "responsible for every attack not notified in advance."

One can easily imagine the mental condition of officers and soldiers trained on such lines and dominated by such ideas when they enter enemy territory. Prepared for treacherous enterprises on the part of the civilian population, they expect them and are apprehensive in regard to them. Dominated by this obsession they explain every unusual event, every incomprehensible phenomenon, by the intervention of the *francs-tireurs*, and such incidents spontaneously range themselves in this special category.

It was not only the manuals which developed in Germany this suggestion. Popular literature, to which reference has already been made, nourished by the legendary developments arising from this theme, largely contributed to it.

"Among the literary productions," remarks R. P. Duhr, "it is particularly novels, and among these the war novels, which have exercised a pernicious influence. This is

especially the case with the military novel *Seestern, 1906, der Zusammenbruch der alten Welt*. This book, which has attained a circulation of about 150,000 copies, expressly says in reference to German troops in Belgium that the *turbulent Belgian population is excited by fanatical priests* (p. 67)."<sup>1</sup>

He describes the dramatic siege of Charleroi, defended by the civilian population who are abundantly provided with arms and explosives. Thus, in times of peace, the operations of *francs-tireurs*, of which the memory had survived the war of 1870, had been assumed to have a possible application to eventual hostilities in Belgium. They appeared there in a new character, which was to become the outstanding feature of the legends relating to the invasion of Belgium in 1914: the attacks of *francs-tireurs* "excited by fanatical priests."

R. P. Duhr has also thrown light upon the effects of this suggestion.

"Above all," he says in the preface to this book, "it is extremely interesting from the psychological standpoint to see how precon-

<sup>1</sup> B. Duhr, *Der Lügengeist im Völkerring*, p. 22.

ceived ideas transform themselves into mania in moments of trouble, and how even men of mature mind may believe that they have seen with their own eyes, and report that they have so seen, events that have never taken place."<sup>1</sup>

The German professor Fassbender insists on the same point. "This subconsciousness," he wrote in the *Tag* (No. 238, 1914) *à propos* the preconceived ideas with which the German army was imbued at the beginning of the campaign, "this subconsciousness is an extraordinarily propitious *terrain* for the transformation of subjective data arising from prejudice into facts of observation."<sup>2</sup>

Certain stories of the campaign of 1914 enable us to observe the actual transposition of a preconceived idea into reality. Such, for instance, is the case of the little book of the hospital orderly in which are narrated the fights in which he took part around Liège in the early days of the war.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8 and 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Aus den Kämpfen um Lüttich von einem Sanitätssoldaten*, p. 11.



"In the Walloon campaign," he begins by saying, "the people were full of hostility towards us and did not hesitate to show it. Along the roads men and women watched us with ferocious and ironical looks. The former, whose green and blue smocks recalled to me, in spite of myself, the descriptions of the famous 'men in blouses' of 1870-1871, adopted a threatening attitude and tried to ridicule us."

Thus at the time of entering Belgium, the German troops were haunted by the recollection of 1870, and the costumes of the Walloon peasants even suggested to them the uniforms of the *francs-tireurs* of former days. One hardly requires a more characteristic indication of their state of mind.

\* \* \*

These early rumours of treacherous attacks committed by the Belgian civil population spread throughout Germany; we will study later by what means. On August 9, 1914, the sixth day of hostilities, the Wolff Agency communicated to the press an official notice in these words:

"The news which comes to us of the fighting at Liège establishes the fact that the inhabitants have taken part in the hostilities. Ambushes have been prepared for our troops and shots fired upon them, as well as upon doctors engaged in their work, and cruelties have been inflicted upon the wounded by the populace. Reports tell us also that the frontier population in the region of Metz have fired from ambushes upon German patrols.

"It may be that these incidents have been favoured by the density of the population in this industrial region, but it is also possible that this war of *francs-tireurs* has been prepared in Belgium and France. If the accuracy of this supposition should be confirmed by a renewal of such attempts our adversaries would only have themselves to blame if the war was carried on with pitiless severity against the culpable population itself. One could not blame the German troops, accustomed to observe discipline and to make war only against the armed forces of an enemy State, if, finding it necessary in defending themselves, they gave no quarter. The hope of exercising an influence upon the war by unchaining popular passions will fail miserably in face of the untiring energy

of our troops. It is, however, established, since the outbreak of hostilities, in the eyes of neutral countries, that it is not the German troops who have provoked a war of this kind."

This notice, which was reproduced in the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* (No. 709, August 10, 1914) under the suggestive title, "Is there a war of *francs-tireurs* in Belgium and France?" lends official confirmation to the first rumours from the front and did not fail to provoke in the public a lively emotion. The newspapers in commenting on it gave the reins to their indignation; the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* (No. 711, August 10, 1914), assuredly one of the most moderate of them, expressed itself in these terms:

"Bestiality is revealed in Belgium in a fashion so terrible that the Commander of the German Army has, with reason, threatened the entire population with pitiless chastisement if further atrocities against combatants and wounded are committed. The Belgian papers are naturally silent about the horrors committed by men and women upon defenceless Germans who have trusted

them, and they represent the legitimate measures of reprisals taken in consequence as spontaneous actions of the German soldiery. There has appeared among a great part of the Belgian people the bestiality which we expected in the big towns but not in country places. We were deceived about that, but not for long.

“On the contrary we have improvised some serious and well-deserved lessons which will doubtless have a widespread effect. The scanty evidence of a desire to amend which the Belgian journals show will soon be transformed. The Antwerp *Handelsblad* dared to write on Thursday: ‘After the way in which the inhabitants of Visé have been treated there can be no question of sentiment and sensibility. Germany has violated towards us all the laws of humanity and civilization and we need no longer recognize any law in dealing with her. We have already made representations to the Powers in this sense.’ ”

On August 14th the German Government made the same allegations more categorically in an official note of remonstrance which it sent to the Belgian Government through the agency

of a neutral Power. This note, which was published on the same date by the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, runs:

“In spite of the note of August 8th in which the Belgian Government undertook, in accordance with the usages of war, to employ only troops in uniform, numerous persons in civilian clothes have taken part in combats around Liège. They have not only fired upon the German troops but have also cruelly massacred the wounded and attacked medical officers engaged in their work. At the same time the populace has destroyed in savage fashion at Antwerp the property of Germans and has butchered in a bestial manner women and children. Germany demands vengeance before the civilized world for the blood of these innocents and for the barbarous way in which Belgium makes war. If the war from this time forward takes on a cruel character it is Belgium which is responsible. In order to protect German troops against the unloosing of the passions of the mob, every person not in uniform, whom visible signs do not clearly indicate as authorized to take part in the fighting, will be treated as an outlaw if he participates in the hostilities, interferes with the German communications, cuts

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telephone wires, or causes explosions; in a word, if he interferes in any unjustifiable fashion whatever in military operations he will be regarded as a *franc-tireur* and shot."

From this moment the attention of the whole of Germany was fixed upon the participation of the civilian population in the Belgian military operations. Nobody doubted this participation. The two official notes published at a short interval had given the matter an enormous advertisement. In the eyes of the multitude these treacherous attacks appeared as one of the most striking features of the war, and the popular mind, already predisposed in the way already described, recalled the circumstances of 1870. Numerous articles in the press have indeed shown the points common to the earlier war and the present one. Thus the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* (No. 712, August 11, 1914) said: "The course of military events is unfolding itself in the same way as at the beginning of the war of 1870."

Many circumstances do, in fact, support this analogy. One seeks in the experiences of 1870, by which Germany was profoundly moved

and which are still present to German minds, precedents and lessons bearing upon the conditions of to-day.

In 1870, the French had hoped to embarrass the forward march of the German troops by the employment of *francs-tireurs*. The press recalls how these succeeded. The *Kölnische Volkszeitung* for example, published in No. 720 (August 13, 1914) an article entitled "How we defended ourselves against *francs-tireurs* in 1870-71."

It runs as follows:

"The prospect resulting from the preceding communications, according to which we shall not be able to avoid contending with *francs-tireurs*, in France and Belgium, need not alarm us, for, as the trouble with the *francs-tireurs* in the last Franco-German War shows, our operations are not likely to be hampered by the treacherous activity of the enemy population.

"The declaration of a French officer belonging to the staff of General Cremer will serve to describe the *francs-tireurs* of 1870-71. 'They do not make war, they merely commit murder!' Our brave troops in the

face of this behaviour of the populace will not show themselves wanting. More than six thousand *francs-tireurs*—exact figures are not available—were certainly shot or massacred in the last war.

“Reprisals carried out with the utmost rigour are the natural consequence of such a war of *francs-tireurs*. Not only were hostages taken as a guarantee that the population would not commit any act of hostility or interfere with telegraphic communication but whole localities were destroyed by fire. The activity of *francs-tireurs* is naturally most to be feared in a mountainous country which gives them facilities for escaping. The *francs-tireurs* did not originate in 1870 but from the companies of *francs-tireurs* which by the invitation of the Minister of War, Marshal Niel, in 1868, were founded under this name, as societies of riflemen drawn from the general public, with a uniform of their own choosing, in some of the towns in the Vosges. Ten companies were constituted at this time in Alsace-Lorraine, among them being the ‘voluntary *francs-tireurs* of Colmar’ who were under the command of Garibaldi. The Italian Bizzoni, of Garibaldi’s staff, depicted very exactly the life of the *francs-tireurs* when he described them as always on



the move like gipsies, without thought of the morrow, and with a weakness for rich châteaux. The Garibaldian *francs-tireurs* of Bourbaki's Eastern army were organized after a fashion. They were almost superior to their German adversaries, as regards the quality of their equipment. While the more ancient corps were made up of members of the middle class, the later formations were collections of adventurers, marauders, and other shady individuals.

"Eventually the mobile National Guard had to be called in to disarm 12,000 to 13,000 of them. These organized *francs-tireurs* did not, at first, perform any greater or more heroic deeds than that at Châtillon, for example, where two or three Uhlans engaged in a reconnaissance were killed by 300 to 400 men carefully concealed. Such were the glorious actions celebrated in the press as deeds of heroism. The *francs-tireurs* eventually became a plague on the population, and in 1870, it was at last said, 'Certainly the Prussians, if they were with us, would not ill-treat us so badly.'"

The histories of *francs-tireurs*, where the memory of 1870 persisted, thus filled the columns of the German papers during the first ten days

of the war. Arousing throughout the country the most lively emotion, they had become the dominating preoccupation of the popular mind and the chief topic of conversation.

It was in the midst of this atmosphere of excitement that the concentration took place of the troops who, following those engaged at Liège, were turned in huge masses into Belgium.

To the natural feverishness which preceded their entry into the campaign and the earliest fighting, there was added the exaltation due to these sensational rumours, and this excitement became so great that it soon affected part of the German press. On August 20, 1914, the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* (No. 741) appealed for calmness:

"Already at the moment of mobilization," it said in an article entitled *Ruhe und Besonnenheit*, "an important part of the population has become a prey to an excitement almost feverish. Even serious people have succumbed to it. Mature, educated persons, for example, have confidently stated that they have seen with their own eyes the French in Cologne in eighteen protected motor-cars."

The soldier K. Barthel notes in his war memorandum book:

"August 10, 1914. We dined at Minden in a beer-house. We were everywhere received and tended most politely. We heard here the story of acts of terror and cruelty committed by the Belgians at Liège. A surgeon was lodging in the house of the burgomaster. When he sat down at table he was seized from behind by his host and had his throat cut. Wounded men were put into a sham hospital. When the Red Cross brought material for bandages it was found that all the wounded had their hands tied behind their backs and their eyes torn out. Upon one of the prisoners were found fingers bearing rings which had been cut from an officer."<sup>1</sup>

Under the influence of these recitals, the spirit of the soldier fermented; he turned toward the battlefields of Belgium with an ardour mixed with anguish. The dangers and risks of war were increased in his eyes by the new peril with which the civil population threatened

<sup>1</sup> Papers of the British Ministry of War: see H. Davignon, *La Belgique et l'Allemagne*, London, Harrison & Son, p. 101.

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him. Besides the bullets and the shells and the hand-to-hand combats there menaced him the equally dangerous ambushes, surprises, and perfidious attacks of the inhabitants. He feared secretly the perpetual *qui vive*, the insecurity which allowed him no rest. Was not this prospect sufficient to demoralize him?

But there were yet other stories to disturb the soul of the German soldier at the time of his entry into Belgium. The histories of *francs-tireurs* had been preceded by accounts of the atrocious treatment said to have been inflicted by the Belgians on German residents expelled from Belgium. These refugees, still upset by the rapid and unexpected development of events, have, in thousands at Aix-la-Chapelle or Cologne, described the circumstances of their return in terms calculated to freeze the blood: children had had their hands cut off by strokes of the sabre, women had been dragged naked through the streets and torn in pieces by the crowd.<sup>1</sup>

Wild imaginations evoked scenes of the utmost atrocity and the public accepted them.

<sup>1</sup> See *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 709, August 10, 1914.

Moreover, the newspapers, sharing in the general disturbance in the early days of the war and losing their critical faculty, published without reserve these terrible accounts. It will be interesting to give here, as an illustration, a summary of those which appeared from August 6 to 14, 1914, in the *Kölnische Zeitung* alone—the great Catholic organ of which the tone ought to have been the most moderate.

(1) How I Escaped from Belgium. (No. 699, August 6th.)

(2) Savage Antwerp. (No. 702, August 7th.)

(3) The Pursuit of Germans in Brussels. (No. 704, August 8th.)

(4) Expelled, nay, Thrown out of Brussels. (No. 706, August 8th.)

(5) Savage Antwerp. (No. 706, August 8th.)

(6) The Sufferings of Germans in Antwerp. (No. 708, August 9th.)

(7) Bestiality in Belgium. (No. 709, August 10th.)

(8) The Hatred of Germans in Belgium. (No. 709, August 10th.)

(9) Bestiality in Belgium. (No. 710, August 10th.)

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(10) On the Hostility towards Germans in Belgium. (No. 711, August 10th.)

(11) Bestiality in Belgium. (No. 711, August 10th.)

(12) From Barbarous Belgium. (No. 712, August 11th.)

(13) Bestiality in Belgium. (No. 713, August 11th.)

(14) On the Treatment of Germans Expelled from Belgium. (No. 716, August 12th.)

(15) Atrocities at Liège. (No. 719, August 13th.)

(16) The Antwerp Monsters. (No. 720, August 13th.)

(17) Belgian Barbarians. (No. 721, August 14th.)

(18) Atrocities at Liège. (No. 722, August 14th.)

Thus one sees that from the 6th to the 14th of August, 1914, the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* published no fewer than eighteen recitals of atrocities of which Germans residing in Belgium had been victims; on the 10th August alone there were five.

These stories were ultimately recognized

either as completely imaginary or at least as much exaggerated. As is now established by German admissions, the disorders were limited to some popular manifestations in certain towns, and to some material damage. At no time was there any attempt on the life of a single German subject.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, a prey to the agitations of the first days of the war the press welcomed without criticism this delirium of the refugees. It gave expression to all their exasperation, painted the Belgian population in odious colours, and excited against the Belgians throughout Germany a violent hatred and an ardent desire for reprisals. The troops assembled on the frontier ready to pour into the little criminal country were naturally not the last to share in this passion; to them the non-combatants delegated the execution of vengeance. Moreover, from the first steps into enemy territory all the stories of the atrocities and perfidious attacks associated with it received a new impetus and the first comers

<sup>1</sup> See *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 799, September 10, 1914; *Berliner Tageblatt*, September 14, 1914; *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, No. 162, March 29, 1915; *Berliner Tageblatt*, No. 179, April 9, 1915.

repeated them with additions to those who followed.

"The most foolish rumours, which soon show themselves false or exaggerated, circulate about the frontier."<sup>1</sup> And were there not burnt villages and smoking ruins to confirm by striking evidence the pitiless character of, and the exasperation caused by, the war? In Belgium itself letters and journals, brought by the military post from Germany to the soldiers on campaign, tended to revive in them the idea of the dangers to which they were exposed from an unscrupulous enemy. A letter found upon a German soldier and reproduced in photographic facsimile by H. Davignon furnishes an example.<sup>2</sup>

"SCHLESWIG, 25: 8: 14.

"DEAR BROTHER,

"I had your address recently from Frederick, and I hope you will receive this letter before your regiment leaves for Brussels. If you have already started, the letter should follow you. As you know, I am attached to

<sup>1</sup> *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 747, August 22, 1914.

<sup>2</sup> *La Belgique et l'Allemagne*, p. 101.



the hospital here and I shall be there a long time, perhaps permanently, although I should like to go to the front as inspector of ambulances. I shall, however, certainly be here until the middle of September.

"You are going next to Brussels with your regiment, as you know. Look out for the civilians, especially in the villages. Do not let any of them approach you. Fire without hesitation upon any of them who approach too near. They are people very cunning and very clever, are the Belgians: even the women and children are armed and will shoot. Never enter into a house, especially if alone. If you drink, make the people drink first, and keep apart from them; in the newspapers there are many stories of soldiers who have been shot while drinking. You, as soldiers, ought to make yourselves so much feared that no civilian will risk coming near you. Always keep in company with others. I hope you have read the papers and know how to look after yourself. Above all, have no compassion on these executioners. Attack them pitilessly with butt and bayonet.

"You will have heard the news of the great victories. By the time we arrive in Belgium our soldiers will probably have

crossed the French frontier. Take care of yourself.

"I hope you will return in good health: may you fare well. Many greetings.

"Your brother, WILLI."

Thus the instigations and mistrust, in the midst of which, in Germany, the army prepared to fight, pursued it even to the battlefield. Warned by so many reminders officers and men were constantly on the alert.

"We have already heard that civilians in ambush have fired upon our German comrades who preceded us," writes, for example, a young soldier, who was describing to his parents a night attack by peasants, "and we are consequently upon our guard." (*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 717, August 12, 1914.)

"We have sufficiently indicated the danger of isolated encampments in Belgium," notes a Saxon officer in his route-book. "Two men, relieved every two hours, should always be on the lookout. It is better to be too prudent than to have one's throat cut by *francs-tireurs* before one can say 'ouf.'" (*Unser Vormarsch bis zur Marne aus dem*

*Kriegstagebuch eines sächsischen Offiziers,  
Strassburger Post, April 1, 1915.)*

Such was indeed the state of mind which dominated the German army when its innumerable flood spread over Belgium and tried to cover it completely. On the one hand there was the mingled hatred and exasperation towards a bestial people which tortured defenceless women and children; on the other the rancour against a small nation which, incapable of understanding the superior destiny of a great empire, blindly ranged itself with that empire's enemies.

"There you are," writes a German lieutenant, "a small people who have misled yourselves to the point of resisting us: you to whom we promised peace and protection if you did not put any obstacle in the way of the accomplishment of our great mission, you who have made common cause with our enemies! In truth, it is as if you assailed a priest bearing the Holy Sacrament."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Story of an episode of *francs-tireurs* in Belgium, reproduced by Major Viktor von Strantz, *Die Eroberung Belgiens, 1914. Selbsterlebtes. Nach Berichten von Feldzugsteilnehmern zusammengestellt und bearbeitet.* Minden i. W., Wilhelm Köhler, p. 34.

A perpetual mistrust was awakened against long expected knaveries by a population thought to have shown itself capable of the worst excesses.

Such was the frame of mind of the invading German troops and all their thoughts were concentrated on this preconception.

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Let us consider again the Congress at Göttingen. The conditions were calculated to produce a minimum error. The witnesses were selected from people least likely to be misled; as passive spectators they could not have been less directly concerned in what took place; with no bias or leaning towards one side or the other they wrote down their versions immediately.

In the case of the operations of the German army in Belgium, the conditions were diametrically the opposite; they were favourable to the production of a maximum of error. Here the witnesses were men of all classes; many, belonging to the proletariat, were of defective education. Being directly concerned in what occurred they were at once actors and specta-

tors. They participated in the violent excitement and being, without exception, imbued with the same prejudices and fixed ideas, they prepared in advance a conception which they converted into reality; they foresaw the events, expected them, and feared them, and far from considering them with an equable mind their souls were charged with implacable hatred.

Again, sometimes a long period elapsed before the facts and the emotions arising from them were placed on record. During the interval recollection was shaped by novel influences; secondary variations were introduced; certain features shaded off; others, which at first had seemed unimportant, became prominent; past events incorporated themselves in certain complexes, conforming to the needs of these; interpretations and comments were added; a series of convergent influences modelled the incidents according to certain types.

If then in the experience at Göttingen, which serves as a basis of comparison, a fourth part of the accounts must be regarded as false, this proportion of error, to say nothing of exaggera-

tion, should in the case of war stories be multiplied by a high coefficient.

The variations in the accounts are not the result of individual fantasy; controlled by a collection of common predispositions, they are, on the contrary, oriented in a determined sense and aim at adapting to particular circumstances a number of already established beliefs. When the first German armies crossed the Belgian frontier, the constituent elements of the legends already existed in a pronounced form in the minds of the troops; in order to bring them to expression nothing was necessary beyond the various incidents of the invasion

### SECTION 3. THE MECHANISM OF LEGENDARY ELABORATION

Misunderstanding resulting from preoccupation with the idea of danger—Suggestion of the *franc-tireur* and reflex reactions  
—Explanatory elaborations—Deliberate falsification of fact.

Having defined the conditions likely, in view of the psychology of the German soldier on campaign, to engender and foster certain legendary developments, we proceed to study

more closely, and from the actual facts, the mechanism of this genesis. We shall be aided by different stories of the war at first hand.

In No. 352 (April 30, 1915), the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* published a communication from *Informations Pax* in these terms:

#### HOW EASILY ONE MAY BE SUSPECTED

"Pastor H. Bodensieck of Osnabrück, Protestant almoner, reports in No. 211 of the *Osnabrücker Tageblatt* (January 29, 1915), the moving episode described below, which was related to him during his stay at Schirmeck by the priest of that place:

"On Friday, August 21st, I buried the first German officer killed in the forest between Sch . . . and R . . . , a lieutenant of the 180th Infantry Regt. The grave-digger arrived about 1 o'clock in the afternoon. He had brought with him four men and the interment took place. I put on my surplice and went to the cemetery. An idea suddenly occurred to me. "You cannot bury this man, who died for his country, without a chant or the sound of a bell." The chant, I told myself, was out of the question, but

there might at least be the tolling of a bell. Then I said to myself, "Since Monday I have stopped the ringing of the bell in order not to imperil the life of the sacristan's son who is in charge of it." On Sunday, the 16th, that is to say at the time when the French, who were at R . . . , were pushing their patrols on towards Sch . . . I had had the bell sounded very softly for fear they should take umbrage at it. I had no idea that this was forbidden by the military authorities, owing to my complete isolation since the 14th, so I asked the grave-digger to toll the bell, saying to him that we should show to an officer the last honours in our power.

"The man did as I told him and I pronounced at the cemetery a short prayer, the *Apostolicum*, Our Father, and the Benediction. My wife told me, later, what occurred during this time. The entire locality was filled with soldiers of all kinds. In a field opposite the presbytery there were hussars under arms. We had just cooked three chickens requisitioned for a group of officers. They had politely refused a bottle of Bordeaux which I had offered to them. The country was held in the direction of the hill D . . . and it was doubtful whether we or the French were advancing. The situation



was, at this moment, I will not say critical, but very uncertain. And the church bell was being sounded in a way audible to the French. At once everybody turned towards the church and there was much excitement in the crowd. My wife noted it and asked, "What is the matter? Are the French coming?" The answer given was: "Someone is ringing the bell; it is a traitor; we will arrest him immediately and shoot him."

"Gendarmes rushed into the church, roughly captured the ringer, and conducted him before the general.

"When my wife, who had come to meet me in a state of much disquietude, told me of this, I at once decided to go and explain. But at the door of the presbytery, I was arrested and, in my surplice, my breviary under my arm, and without biretta, escorted by two mounted gendarmes, one of them following me, I was conducted across Sch . . . . I should not care to encounter again the looks and the remarks made in a low voice which welcomed me during this progress among the troops. What moved me was to hear the postman who, having learned of the arrest of a traitor, came running down the road without his hat crying to the gendarmes: "You are altogether foolish, let the pastor go;

I know him, he has done nothing." A Jew, waving his hands and half in tears, asked: "What have you done?" etc.

"I soothed these brave people and said to them simply: "I caused the bell to be rung and that seems to be forbidden." I can affirm that I was calm and felt no fear; I was, however, conscious of the danger which involved both myself and the grave-digger who, at my request, had rung the bell. It is certain that if a French shell had fallen after the ringing we should neither of us have been spared. There would have been established, not unnaturally, a relation of cause and effect between the two facts, and in war time there is not much scope for hearing witnesses, or for obtaining evidence in one's defence. What was, and is still, the most painful feature of the case is that I am the son of a German officer of 1870; that I have behind me eleven years of activity, not only as a pastor, but as a German in a region with French sympathies, and that I should have been suspected of having signalled to the enemy when I only wished to honour a dead officer.

"This is what I said to the general at Sch . . . , and although I could not submit any proof of my ignorance of the prohibition

as to the ringing, he nevertheless believed me and set both of us at liberty, for as soon as I had the opportunity of speaking I at once declared that the grave-digger, pale as death and trembling as he stood by my side, had only acted under my orders and that I alone was responsible.'

"Pastor Bodensieck has added to this account, in conclusion, a remark with which we are in complete agreement: 'So ends the story of this tragic blunder.' One cannot fail to sympathize with this pastor exposed unjustly to so grave a suspicion and to wish him well. This serious incident, which is, in a sense, very characteristic, shows anew how in troubled and disturbed times, the life of an absolutely innocent person may in certain circumstances be gravely menaced. If judicial errors are not entirely avoidable in times of peace—it is human to err—how much more likely are they in war time. If the case above described had a happy and satisfactory ending it was, without doubt, due to the manly attitude of the inculpated person and the perspicacity of the general at Sch . . . .

"P. I."

Let us pause for a moment over this example; it shows a case of simple misunderstanding

provoked by a collection of circumstances. There was nevertheless a possibility that the misunderstanding might not be dissipated but but might instead give birth to a legend.

Waiting troops were on the *qui vive*, near the enemy; uncertain of what was passing before them and of what destiny had in store for them, a heavy apprehension weighed upon them. Their attention was fixed in the direction where an action was taking place. And in the midst of this stormy silence a church bell sounds. A reaction affects all in the same way; dominated only by the thought of the enemy, all spontaneously associate the incident with this; they cannot conceive an explanation of it, except in terms of this dominating prepossession: the ringing is a signal to the enemy, an act of treason.

This state of affairs must always be kept in view; in moments when the expectation of danger concentrates the attention upon one idea the natural result, it may even be said the inevitable result, is to link all fortuitous circumstances with that idea.

Another incident dating back to the first days of the war illustrates this proposition in a fashion still more characteristic.

The *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 766, August 29, 1914, tells the story in the following words:

"An Alsatian Catholic priest who enjoys general esteem on account of his calm and balanced judgment, writes to us:

"I should like to report as a typical example of the origin of legends about *francs-tireurs* (everyone admits isolated cases with adequate foundation) an incident which happened in an Alsatian village during the forward march of the troops, and in which only a series of fortunate circumstances prevented the taking against the village of most rigorous measures.

"Since the first hour of mobilization this village of about five hundred inhabitants has had to accommodate, besides a strong garrison and a company of artisans, large contingents of troops passing through on their march to the front; each one did what he could; thus I sent my sister to give help in my father's house. About forty men had to be waited upon by her at all hours in addition to many other services. We gave what was in the village as long as there was any-

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thing to give, and regarded ourselves as fortunate if a man, by chance, in passing left a morsel of *Pumpernickel*. We had then a little bread for ourselves.

“Two weeks passed thus happily. On the Eve of the Assumption, towards midnight, one sought one's sleeping place if it had not been given up to a soldier. But something new happened.

“A soldier in charge of billeting announced that a large body of troops would be due at two o'clock in the morning. Such provision as could be made of beds, arm-chairs, and easy chairs in order to give the newcomers a little repose was provided as quickly as possible. At the appointed hour the troops arrived. Before crossing the Rhine the order was given to load as it was thought that the enemy might be in the outskirts of the town. The men were quickly installed, and the inhabitants of the town were at last able to think of sleep. Hardly had they settled down when the desire for sleep left them. There was an explosion, then another, then a noise of chairs and seats knocked over, men shouting and running and then—Heaven preserve us—sounds of firing at all the corners and bullets whistling in a fashion little reassuring across the sombre night. The

noise had already attracted my little sister. She wished to see the aeroplane which was being fired at! Quickly my brother got her back into the house and behind her there precipitated themselves, crowded together, five, ten, twenty men, and still others. For it was not upwards upon an aeroplane that people were firing, but horizontally across the streets that the bullets whistled. Therefore, to the shelter of the interior of the house!

“Some further shots, then all was silent. One heard again human voices and dared to risk going outside. The burgomaster was already on the bridge.

““I am very sorry,” a superior officer said to him, “but in a case like this one must apply the rules of war with rigour.”

“Presently he went into his house.

““You see, Mademoiselle, the sort of reception we get. Hardly have we entered Alsace than the people fire upon us.”

““What, *francs-tireurs*? Here in the village? Our neighbour? It is impossible, Captain.”

““It is a fact, the sentry below the window distinctly saw firing from the window opposite.”

““However the window in question opened and a voice cried from within: “Help!” A

sergeant-major and an under officer belonging to the garrison, in shirt-sleeves, but good German soldiers, none the less, were the occupants of the room.

“The Captain looked at his map reflectively.

““Major, where in fact are we?”

““Allow me to help you,” said my sister, who thought that talk of the rules of war called for decisive action. “You are ten minutes beyond the Rhine at . . . For the last fifteen days we have had here a swarm of soldiers. Ask them if we have not done all that is humanly possible to satisfy them. If we had wished to fire upon you, we should have begun differently. I assure you that nobody in the village is capable of it. Least of all our neighbour, the inn-keeper. Be reassured, you are still more than forty kilometres from the French frontier and we are doing our duty.” In time it is ascertained that the house has been searched and that the two soldiers found in the room in question deny having fired from the window. The proprietor and his son are led forward at the same moment. “If not there, where then was the firing? For a shot has been fired and the offender is a *franc-tireur*! Therefore the responsibility rests on the



village!" A fortunate accident supplies the explanation, which clears everything up.

"While all sorts of conjectures were being bruited about some ambulance men brought in a soldier seriously wounded. They had found him in the barn of the inn, which is situated at the opposite side. Some other men from the barn also presented themselves with slight wounds of the face. According to other soldiers, who were in the barn, the shot was fired into that room and others definitely had seen that it came from above. It was a cartridge with shot: hence the numerous small face wounds.

"Scratches," said the major whom the men, during the alarm, had gone to seek. As to the soldier grievously wounded, it appeared that a fragment, the size of the fist, had been torn off the upper part of his thigh and the blood was flowing freely. This did not look like the effect of a bullet.

"While the doctors were still in doubt and my sister pronounced the prayer for the dead, an under-officer who had also been in the barn came forward. A ball had penetrated his arm in a direction which, as my sister showed the doctor, excluded firing from above on a sleeping man and indicated rather a shot fired horizontally near the ground.

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The under-officer declared positively that the bullet could only have come from the rifle of one of the men, some of whom had kept their arms by them. A flask struck by a bullet was found, still on one of the men, which showed that the wound could be explained in this way. After having passed through the under-officer's arm the bullet, in passing through the flask or otherwise, had been reversed and so caused the extensive injury.

“On the following morning the innkeeper and his son were released with a few grey hairs added to their stock. The men who had taken part in the affair stated that they had acted so promptly because on the previous day they had been told, in Baden, very bad things about the Alsatians.

“Later, we learnt another detail of this tragic affair. My brother had lodged a part of his people in a second house near the barn. There were here artisans without arms and about eight pioneers armed with rifles. When the shots were heard, one of the artisans ran in the direction whence they came. Those who were firing noticed him and cried immediately: “There is the *franc-tireur!*” He thought it was the French and tried to conceal himself. The pioneers had mean-

while struck a light; they saw the gleam of bayonets and quickly extinguished it.

“““Take cover!” cried someone.

“““Let us surrender,” said another.

“““Halt! I saw a helmet; they are Germans; the . . .th regiment,” cried a third still more loudly.

““Besiegers and besieged happily recognized each other before blood flowed.

““By now, life has resumed its accustomed course in the village.’”

The incident is told in a lively fashion, and one is able to follow the psychological evolution of it in the same spirit as those who were actors in it. It is again a case of a mistake. Provoked by a chance circumstance it found the course of its development in the ideas with which the troops were imbued.

The officers believed the enemy near and the danger imminent; they had ordered the rifles to be loaded as they entered the village; the men slept with the rifles by their sides; all expected the *franc-tireur*. An explosion occurred in the silence of the night; a fusillade succeeded; the bullets whistled along the streets. Suddenly awakened, the firing provoked among

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all the soldiers the same thought; they rushed for their weapons and fired without seeing anything. Why did they fire? Upon what? There are other explanations besides an attack when a shot is fired at night. Aroused roughly from sleep the soldiers fired into the darkness—on the phantom of their dreams.

What was this peril against which they reacted thus instinctively? The first words of the officers indicate it:

“Yes, that’s the sort of reception we get! We have hardly entered Alsace when the people begin to fire on us.”

If these words express indignation, they do not assuredly denote any astonishment. The attack of the *franc-tireur* is an expected event; the mind is prepared for it.

Has not a sentry seen quite distinctly a shot fired from a window of the inn? There are two German soldiers in the room concerned. No matter! we will seize the innkeeper and his son. Led out under a strong escort will they not be henceforth evidence that a crime has been attempted? Here, in addition, are the victims; several soldiers have received slight

wounds of the face. Who does not see at once the only reasonable conclusion? Someone has fired with a sporting gun loaded with shot: there can be no doubt the offender is some poacher. Moreover, the soldiers have seen a man running and having recognized him immediately have cried: "There he is, the *franc-tireur!*"

Thus the initial fact of an explosion has by an impulsive reaction driven the soldiers to seize their arms, for the presuggestion of the *franc-tireur* has prepared the nervous system to react in this way. "Our men are nervous and fire on slight provocation," notes in another connection a letter from the doctor of a German battalion, dated Verviers, August the 12th, 1914.<sup>1</sup>

Living in a state of constant apprehension, they fire at the least unusual circumstance. They fire haphazard, against an imaginary danger, or against some inoffensive person. But when the victim is there, a civilian, sometimes perhaps a German soldier, how can one

<sup>1</sup> *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 745, August 22, 1914, *Aus den Feldlagern vor Lüttich*.

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admit that this sad reality of death may have been derived from a chimerical danger? The mind instinctively refuses to recognize its mistake. A natural explanation which corresponds to its prejudices and is in accordance with them will be likely to receive acceptance. If the German soldier is dead, must it not be the civilian enemy who has slain him? If the civilian is dead, is not that proof that he was guilty? Thus each attitude and each thought obeys the magnetism of a common suggestion and finally creates a reality conformable with itself.

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A book by Lieutenant von Trotha, *Mit den Feldgrauen nach Belgien hinein. Kriegserlebnisse und Schilderungen*,<sup>1</sup> gives the following account, taken from the report of a German captain, of an incident which throws light, in a no less characteristic fashion, on the effects of prejudice:

"The company occupied a brigade advanced post not far from the Dutch frontier. The nearest German troops were thirty-six

<sup>1</sup> Leipzig, Hesse und Becker, 1915.

kilometres away, and as an attack by powerful enemy forces had been notified to the commandant of this company, that officer resolved to entrench himself as firmly as possible with his men. Advanced patrols watched the neighbourhood. Twenty Uhlans attached to the small detachment performed their task in perfect fashion. In order to make his little troop as mobile as possible the captain had requisitioned thirty bicycles and had distributed them to the men of his company who could ride.

"Towards midnight a man seriously wounded, belonging to one of the patrols, rejoined his company; he was only able to say that the rest of the patrol had been killed. This had happened in a small town about thirty kilometres from the position occupied by the company; it had probably been done by *francs-tireurs*. The commander of the company immediately requisitioned conveyances to carry forty men, made the Uhlans and the cyclists mount, and set out as speedily as possible with his small force to the place where the attack had taken place.

"At dawn the little detachment reached its destination; some of the men immediately burst into the houses of the burgomaster and the curé and pulled them both out of bed.

“‘Send a bellman round at once to announce that all arms must be collected in half an hour,’ the captain directed the mayor. ‘The people who have killed the two Uhlans must also be brought before me in the same way. Let the bodies of the two victims be brought here immediately together with their equipment. If this is not all done in the time fixed the entire village will be burnt.’

“Trembling and with imploring looks, *in a way appropriate to assassins who have accomplished their misdeeds* and have been caught, the man promised to carry out all these instructions and the orders were soon communicated to the public.

“As if one had kicked over a hive the inhabitants poured out of their houses in a swarm; trembling and crying they surrounded the officer and his soldiers. Within half an hour a pretty considerable number of rifles, revolvers, other arms, and ammunition had been collected and loaded upon conveyances. Meanwhile the interrogation had been commenced. Only one dead man had been found; he had immediately been given Christian burial, thanks to the solicitude of the curé. No civilian had participated in the firing. It was Belgian gendarmes who had fought. These declarations appeared to the



German soldiers worthy of credence, but as the captain wished to surprise with his troop other localities farther on he took with him, as a precaution, the two hostages and promised to return on a subsequent day in order to put matters right.

"The actual position, as deduced by the commandant from all the evidence, was that the gendarmes were scattered in small groups through the locality and that they had united for the purpose of an attack.

"The captain thereupon returned to his base where new instructions awaited him.

"After several days devoted to expeditions in the neighbourhood, he returned to the little village where the attack had taken place.

"The curé was made to conduct the captain to the cemetery where the body of the soldier who had been killed was exhumed in order to verify the absence of mutilation. All was in order. The body was again buried with military honours and a fine tomb provided. A suitable cross was ordered to be placed there within three days with this inscription: 'Died like a hero for his country.'

"The building of the gendarmerie near the cemetery was burned as a funeral pyre for the dead and a warning to the inhabitants.

"When the soldiers returned to their conveyances the people at once gave place to them; all were silent and uncovered themselves respectfully. 'Besides the fear instilled,' so ends the report, 'they had learnt to have consideration for the way in which the German army is accustomed to honour and revenge its dead.'" (Pp. 94-98.)

This new example conforms also to the familiar theme: that of a skirmish of advanced guards. It recalls in a striking way the three cases described by Styn Streuvels in his journal (see pp. 132-134).

An advanced German patrol is received in a small Belgian village near the frontier with shots. A single man, seriously wounded, returns to camp; all that he can say is that it is the Belgians who have fired upon him and slain his companions; he has not identified the aggressors, but the suggestion which influences him indicates them sufficiently; they are probably *francs-tireurs*.

This explanation, the first which presents itself to his mind, is immediately transformed into certainty by officers and men. It accords

only too well with their preconceptions; it corresponds exactly with their mental attitude; it is confirmed by so many warnings that it cannot fail to become a settled conviction.

This projection of probability into certainty is shown by the attitude and words of the captain.

It is under the dominion of a veritable fixed idea that he organizes at once a punitive expedition. Arrived in the village where the attack has taken place, he orders the culprits to be led out. There is in his mind no room for doubt; the culprits are the villagers. And when these, terrified by his threats, tremble and watch him with imploring looks he immediately recognizes in their attitude that of assassins surprised after the accomplishment of their misdeeds. The enquiry, however, shows that the attack has been made by gendarmes belonging to the regular Belgian army. Notwithstanding this, the conviction of the culpability of the civilians is not altogether abandoned by the officer and although the ambush of which the German patrol had been the victim was perfectly legitimate he burns the buildings

of the gendarmerie "as a warning to the inhabitants."

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A little book, written by another German officer, shows more clearly still, if that is possible, the effect of a pre-established suggestion. It is entitled *An der Spitze meiner Kompagnie, drei Monate Kriegserlebnisse*.<sup>1</sup> The author, a Landwehr captain named Oskar Höcker, is a well-known contemporary German novelist. He has noted, from day to day, in a lively fashion, the impressions gathered in the course of the first months of the campaign.

From the moment when, right at the beginning of hostilities, he entered Belgian territory, the *franc-tireur* became his leading preoccupation; this fear of civilians never left him; it haunted him.

"Our mission," he writes, "is grave and difficult. We have to clear the *francs-tireurs* out of the territory between here and the Meuse. Every day there is firing from ambushes on passing troops, in particular upon the small detachments, the dispatch-bearers,

<sup>1</sup> Berlin und Wien, Verlag Allstein, 1914.

the under officers on bicycles, the military automobiles. Energetic action is necessary. A clear and strongly worded proclamation directs the inhabitants of the parts of Belgium occupied by us that they must deliver up at once ammunition and explosives. . . .

"Our people know what is at issue. We do not wish to act like barbarians, but we must intervene with the utmost severity. In each farm where I go to search for arms I shall give a last opportunity to the proprietor to deliver up to me those concealed in his house. If he says that he has none and some are found he will be at once shot.

"The men of my company have taken up their quarters in the communal house of Thimister, in the school, in some barns. I go from camp to camp and warn men to be on their guard, to appoint from hour to hour a man as sentry, and to keep their rifles loaded, ready for every eventuality. Attacks by *francs-tireurs* are here the order of the day; even the men lodged in houses are not secure in this region invaded by the *canaille* of Liège. They ought not even to drink anything of which the inhabitants who cater for them have not first tasted in their presence." (Pp. 22-23.)

Captain Höcker therefore scours the country with his men and searches each house.

"It is impossible," he continues, "for a foot soldier, loaded with a complete equipment for a campaign, to get through narrow passages and the entries of cellars to sound hiding places and to search every corner. So, this was my first care; I requisitioned for each detachment a vehicle with sacks. Our men acquitted themselves of their difficult mission with redoubled zeal when they were eased of their burdens. The result of the day justified my precautions; in many localities we discovered well-developed industries carried on in private houses and devoted to the manufacture of arms! While in the workshops of the locksmiths and the forges of these same localities only the most inoffensive objects were being worked at, the fabrication of arms was carried on in the living rooms and on the ground floor. In a small house we came upon an enormous dépôt of rifle bolts. It was a veritable arsenal. Competent men in my company declared that with the material found, twenty thousand rifles could be fitted in a few days. I caused all the inhabitants to assemble at the sound of the drum and forbade them to

continue working. All men, women, and children were compelled to put their material into sacks or boxes and bring it outside the houses. All the tools were destroyed; the screw nuts were loaded on a cart; a house where the occupants resisted was burnt. Under threat of the death penalty for any attempt to take away any of the confiscated material, I left the village; but I returned because important movements of pigeons in this locality appeared to me suspicious. My friend, the great Adam, who belonged to the first group, was pleased to be able to let me profit by his experience; he is himself a breeder of carrier-pigeons. As a fact the first pigeon which was trapped and brought to me had a stamp upon its left wing. There is no doubt that these carrier-pigeons were intended to convey information to the bands of *francs-tireurs*, which were formed in Liège and its environs, of the progress of the rifle-making. Carriages conveyed the confiscated pigeons in long baskets towards the battalion, and the same evening the news of my discovery was known throughout the brigade.

“Measures were certainly taken at once by the inspections of storehouses in order to put obstacles in the way of the arming of the *canaille* of Liège, by means of the industries

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carried on in the private houses of this district." (Pp. 28-31.)

The mentality of the German officer is here depicted to the life. The notes enable us to follow in their intimate workings the travail of his soul; one can easily discover there the perturbations which derange the mechanism; the influence of suggestion and the deviations which this causes in the judgment appear in their naked simplicity.

This officer, when he enters upon the campaign, is already prejudiced against the enemy population; he is warned of its hostile disposition; strange rumours have filled him with mistrust; his imagination precedes the event, he foresees attacks; these appear to him as a special category of the defensive operations, and it is his mission to put an end to them.

By his instructions, he makes his men share his apprehensions. The army is not a place where one speculates about ideas. It is an instrument of action. Opinion is there promptly translated into activity. The source of it may be an instruction vague or precise, a rational



or pre-established conviction, a doubtful presumption or a certainty; it matters not. From the point of view of the subordinates it is expressed in a definite order; it bears to their eyes the aspect of a positive fact.

Captain Höcker expected the attacks of *francs-tireurs*; he ordered his men to be on their guard, to keep their loaded rifles constantly at their sides, to make the inhabitants taste drinks before they themselves drank, to search systematically in each house. The soldiers did not know the origin of, or the foundation for, this order; but it sufficed to impress upon the danger, which their chief apprehended, the character of reality.

In this frame of mind, the captain discovers houses where the inhabitants are concerned in the making of rifle parts. This at once confirms his distrust. It recalls his original suspicions. For this manufacture of arms is not carried on openly in the workshops of the locksmiths and in the forges; there the men are working only on tools or inoffensive instruments, while the fabrication of arms is carried on in a clandestine manner in the ground-floor rooms of the houses,

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Still under the influence of this first discovery the German officer makes a second: a flight of pigeons attracts his attention; he has one caught and under its left wing he discovers mysterious marks. He does not understand the purport of them but his soul thirsts for an explanation; that is one of the tendencies most deeply ingrained in his nature. When the facts will not furnish one his imagination supplies the deficiency; it does not remain mute before the mysterious and the incomprehensible. This explanation is not, however, purely an effort of the imagination; on the contrary it is suggested to him, in a sense imposed upon him, by his directing ideas, his tendencies, his logic, his prejudices; it tends to bring the new facts into accord with the collection of anterior beliefs and to make them participate in the judgments which he makes on things in general.

In this way Captain Höcker established a relation between the marks printed on the under side of the pigeon's wing and the clandestine manufacture of rifles. Both facts accord with his prejudice in regard to the hostile attitude

of the population and the treacherous attack which they meditate.

These mysterious marks betray a plot; their aim is, without doubt, to inform bands of *francs-tireurs* of the progress in the making of rifles destined for their use. Thus each new circumstance is linked with the preceding, confirms it, and incorporates itself in the complex reasoning, whence is born an unshakable conviction.

But what is the true significance of the facts which are regarded by Captain Höcker as overwhelming proofs of guilt?

The making of rifles is one of the most important branches of home industries carried on in Belgium and is located particularly in the environs of Liège which Captain Höcker's company was deputed to explore.

Many books, including official monographs, are devoted to it; they study its different aspects, its processes, its organization; they describe in particular the special forms which the work takes. The parts which the workmen finish are supplied by the big works in Liège and distributed in certain districts. Each group of villages concerns itself with a

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particular class of parts; it is exceptional to find a rifle completely fitted.

This work, one must add, is neither more nor less clandestine than that of any other home industry; that it should be carried out in the living rooms of the people is in the nature of things.

The explanation of the marks which the pigeons bear on their wings is no less simple.

In no other country is the cult of the carrier-pigeon so widespread as in Belgium. The birds are kept for the purpose of racing, money prizes of considerable value being offered. These race meetings constitute by far the most popular pastime in the country; they are organized by societies of pigeon fanciers, and there is hardly a locality which does not possess one. Each of the societies organizes several pigeon races each year; so that from the end of February to the end of September, no Sunday passes in any given locality without there being at least one in some village or other.

These gatherings, publicly announced by posters, circulars, and special newspapers, attract all the lovers of the sport in the vicinity.

On Friday or Saturday, the pigeons entered for the competition are deposited in the society's district. From their earliest days the birds wear on the leg an aluminium ring indicating their age and the owner's number. Usually too the owner stamps on the wing his private mark.

The competing pigeons are noted; a rubber ring bearing the society's number, as well as a serial number, is slipped over the foot, and similar marks are stamped on the under surface of the wing. The pigeons are then put into long osier baskets, taken to the nearest station, and sent in some person's charge to the place where they are to be released. The most frequent meets are those in which the birds are set free at Quiévrain, Noyon, or even Dax. Each week, in the season, wagon-loads of pigeons from all parts of Belgium arrive in these towns. The competitors keep a sharp lookout for the returning birds. When one of these enters its cote they remove the rubber ring, put it in a little box, and insert this in an automatic checking machine, which impresses on a dial the time of arrival.

These pigeon competitions constitute the

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amusement most characteristic of the Belgian people, and the country around Liège is that where pigeon fancying has the most followers. They are called in local language *colébeux*.

The suspicious flight of the pigeons, the marks imprinted below their wings which indicated the name of the owner, the number of the society running the competition, and the bird's own number, all these signs which for Captain Höcker were proofs of guilt, were in reality indications of a perfectly pacific and inoffensive activity.

The same may be said of the *crêneaux* in the façades of houses, which are mentioned in a great number of the stories about *francs-tireurs* in Belgium. The pamphlet *Die Wahrheit über den Krieg*<sup>1</sup> says, for example, according to the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, that

“here [*i. e.*, Louvain] many of the façades of the houses are prepared in view of a war of *francs-tireurs*; they have openings through which the barrel of a rifle may be passed, and which are closed by movable metal plates. This has been done by technical

<sup>1</sup> Berlin, E. S. Mittler, 1914, 2d edition.

specialists in view of a systematic organization of the war." (P. 60.)

The observation is correct as to the fact: narrow openings covered by movable metal plates are to be found in the façades of most Belgian houses; the German soldier was ignorant of their purpose and his soul demanded an explanation. But he lived in the midst of images of *francs-tireurs*; they pursued him; he was indeed haunted by them. What explanation could he imagine which was not bound up with the fixed idea? The openings could only serve for the passage of rifle barrels directed against German troops. This supposition accorded with his preoccupations, confirmed his apprehensions, justified his mistrust; the slots were loopholes and so the proof is clear not only of the reality of attacks, but of their having been long premeditated.

These loopholes are, however, simply crevices for fixing the supports of the scaffolding when the house requires painting. They are found throughout Belgium, though in other countries, hooks are used instead of them.

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Among the stories submitted to the investigation of the association *Pax*, many are capable of explanation in a similar way to those already quoted. This is the case, for example, with the promise to a murderer of "the kingdom of heaven" of which the legendary character is more clearly affirmed than in the preceding cases, and of which the official enquiry has defined with great precision the real foundation and the superstructure of falsehood.

The story is told by the soldier Rössner, in a railway carriage; a Catholic priest in the Belgian village of Patsie (Battice?) had received very cordially a German major and his orderly. He promised the kingdom of heaven to a boy of ten years if he would kill both. The child committed the crime and was executed together with the priest.

The enquiry by the Prussian Ministry of War shows that at the beginning of the campaign not far from a village of which the name cannot be identified, Rössner's regiment passed near the bodies of two or three civilians shot by the roadside. One was that of a boy of about thirteen years, another that of an



adult in black; the investigation did not determine whether he was a priest or not, nor for what reason these civilians had been shot. The report of the military authorities adds that "the story of the priest and the boy which has been enquired into is widely spread as a rumour among the troops on the march."

From these facts, it is possible to reconstitute, in a particularly concrete fashion, the process of legendary development.

A column of infantry advances into Belgium at the beginning of the war. The men talk among themselves. Their attention is attracted to something by the roadside. Those in front discover the bodies of civilians. Others, not in an equally good position to see what is going on, question those more favourably situated.

"What is the matter?"

"There are some civilians, who have been shot, by the roadside."

"How many?"

"Two, three, a boy, a man in black, a priest."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stories by German soldiers give examples of the questions which on the occasion of anything unusual are bandied about

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A new question immediately arises from the desire for an explanation.

"Why have they been shot?"

And the unformulated answer already controls their thoughts. If these people have been executed, it is because they have committed a crime. What crime? There is one eventuality present to all minds, which masks all others, and the menace of which, directed against themselves, affects them intimately.

They have fired on the German troops; they are *francs-tireurs*. This conviction, which is in harmony with all their views, is at once expressed and becomes a certainty, an established fact.

The mind, however, asks for additional details. As for the man in black, it is natural that he should have so expiated his fault; it is the priests who incite the populace to commit murder, who make fanatics of them. But how

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among the troops. "A feverish restlessness," says one of them who was taking part in the operations round Liège, "gradually invades the troop. It is asked, How far are we from Liège? Where are we going? Where shall we be firing? What is happening? Is it an assault on Liège? We shall soon be there!" So run the comments." (*Aus den Kämpfen um Lüttich von einem Sanitätssoldaten*, p. 15.)

about the boy? Has he also taken up arms? Assuredly not of his own free will; someone has driven him to do it; someone has suggested the act to him, has commanded him to do it. Who, if not the priest? It would be easy for him to invoke the authority of religion, to promise a celestial reward for the assassination—acme of perfidy—of a German officer whom he had welcomed under his roof. Thus the history is rounded off. By the successive addition of suppositions, of points of resemblance, of presumptions passed from mouth to mouth, it is crystallized into a single version which satisfies everybody and corresponds to everybody's notion of the truth. One can thus follow its development in the passage through successive stages. Transmitted from rank to rank by way of question and answer it becomes more and more elaborated as it progresses. It is refracted, deformed, modelled, it nourishes itself on the commentaries and explanations which are added at each stage. Its main features, however, are endorsed and rendered more precise, and thus a simple fact observed by the head of a column has attained the standing of

a legend by the time it reaches the rearmost ranks.

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Legendary elaboration is not solely the result of unconscious inaccuracies in the relation of observed facts. No doubt these are the principal source, but one must take note also of deliberate falsifications.

The German professor, Heinrich Heubner, captain in the reserve, affords an example worthy of study. He has consigned to a book his impressions of the start of the campaign in Belgium.<sup>1</sup> On August 5, 1914, his regiment was for the first time engaged against the Belgian troops before Liège.

“A hundred metres on this side of the dressing station,” he recounts, “I found the two companies behind a large and massive house in a meadow running downwards and planted with fruit trees. They had just been bombarded by the artillery with a precision which convinced us that our new positions, although invisible by the enemy, had

<sup>1</sup> *Unter Emmich vor Lüttich. Unter Kluck vor Paris. Selbsterlebtes aus dem Herbstfeldzug, 1914.* Schwerin i. Mecklb.; Verlag des Hofbuchhändlers Friedrich Bahn, 1915.

been communicated to him by secret signals made from the village in the environs of which we found ourselves. For this reason, by order of the new commandant of the battalion, Captain von S . . . , a party of men, with a deputy sergeant-major and me, was sent to search the village. This was situated upon a height dominating the neighbourhood, and there was no doubt that signals could be made to the Belgian artillery from its belfry. Naturally all was quiet there but at a little distance in front of the church, we saw to the left in a pretty garden two Belgian civilians hastening down a narrow path towards their house at the end of the garden. Upon my cry of Halt! which I supported with a display of my revolver, they stopped and presented themselves as the burgomaster and his son-in-law. We terrified them and threatened them with immediate execution if they did not stop the villagers from signaling to the enemy.

"After this we went on towards the church, in the doorway of which there appeared a portly priest who, naturally, affirmed his innocence and assured us that he had only been reading an inoffensive mass. We were still too candid and inexperienced to recognize that we ought to have arrested immedi-

ately both him and the burgomaster. Finally, there remained only one building from which signals could have been made to the enemy; it was a château situated still further in advance of the village, enormous and deserted. It gave the impression of not having been occupied for years. The series of rooms, with their old tapestries eaten by moths, with their coating of stucco falling bit by bit, with their marble chimney-pieces covered with dust, and their coloured frescoes effaced, bathed by the bright sunlight, gave a disquieting impression. We searched the whole building, from cellar to attic, without discovering anything important.

"A little annoyed by the failure of our researches, we returned in the direction of the village. The deputy sergeant-major, rendered completely furious, arrested on the way another priest, who was standing before his house and whose physiognomy inspired little confidence. An honourable butcher, who had committed the imprudence of looking out-of-doors from his shop, was also taken by the collar by my fighting cock, whose ill-temper began to amuse me, and compelled to come with us in his velvet slippers. I was curious to see what would happen, and I was resolved to intervene if

matters took a turn dangerous for these people who, as far as I could see, were innocent. As a matter of fact, the sergeant-major declared roundly to the commandant of the battalion that these two *canailles* had made signals to the enemy, and asked leave to shoot them. The priest, who understood some words of German, and to whom the indignant faces of our men presaged no good, went down on his knees, and prayed with his face and hands raised to heaven. At this moment I intervened and opposed the execution of these two unfortunates, who were, I was convinced, innocent. They were released and thanked me by a silent regard for having saved them.

"I should remark that many priests have been considered by our troops guilty of treason, and have received well-deserved punishment, but many innocent persons have given their lives on account of the atrocities of the Belgian people. No one, however, should reproach our soldiers for occasional mistakes, since their exasperation has reached its culminating point through the perfidious attacks of the Belgian populace." (Pp. 29-32.)

This example is full of instruction. In declaring that the priest and the butcher, whom

he had seized without any justification, had signalled to the enemy, it is not unconsciously that the sergeant-major abuses the truth; he deliberately falsifies it. His untruthfulness is not, however, explained entirely by his attitude of hatred towards Belgian civilians. The recital of Captain Heubner allows us to follow its psychological evolution and to ascertain its intimate motives.

The case of Captain Höcker has already shown us how, in war, the opinion of an officer, even though only a simple presumption, is translated by his subordinates into an order which is, in their eyes, equivalent to a positive fact. Captain Heubner teaches us even more; he renders an account of the way in which an order is executed.

\* A German commandant, in order to put his battalion out of danger from the fire of the enemy, masses them behind a large and massive house in the environs of a village. Although the troop is completely hidden, the shells of the Belgian artillery, nevertheless, continue to pursue it with a singular precision. How is this precision to be explained? An idea at once



surges into the minds of troops all under the influence of a particular suggestion: the inhabitants of the village are signalling to the enemy the German positions.

It is no doubt very unpleasant to be threatened, and not to know how to get out of danger. The commandant, feeling the need of saving his unit from destruction, gives an order. Captain Heubner does not tell us the wording of it, but it is easily imagined.

“They are signalling our positions to the enemy. Let ten men search this village!”

Such an order, as in the case of Captain Höcker, may be founded on a justifiable, or an unjustifiable, hypothesis, upon simple doubt or established conviction. This makes no difference to those who receive it; they are not concerned with its origin; for them it has the aspect of certainty.

The detachment explores the village in vain; it finds nothing suspicious. Tired with its fruitless efforts, it has to render an account of its failure. What at such a time will be the mental state of the subordinate officer in charge

of the patrol? He is not satisfied. He has received a formal order. There is before him, confusedly, this double perspective: either he has fulfilled his duty properly and is giving to his chief a guarantee that there are no spies in the village, or he has failed in his task, and has rendered himself open to a reprimand.

But he knows well that a superior officer must not be regarded as mistaken, and so he at once excludes the first alternative; he does not even stop to consider it; he confines his attention to the second. Moreover, he does not attempt to analyze the logical operation which has resulted in the issue of the order nor to criticize it. He keeps to the text. Discipline is rigorous in the German army; an order is an order. The sergeant-major recognizes as his first duty, punctuality. He anticipates a brutal remark, perhaps a severe penalty. Rather than return with empty hands, furious at his want of success, he seizes haphazard two of the inhabitants. One of them, the priest, is suspected on principle; both will serve as evidence of the scrupulous accomplishment of his mission.

Thus while the order into which the ideas of the chief are translated gives his mind the comfort of a definite proposition, its punctual execution tends to produce the result which its imperious terms demand. Such is the general mechanism, proper to military discipline during a campaign, which principally contributes to the projection into reality of the subjective representations reigning in the army and creates for this reality an objective foundation which supplies all the appearance of confirmation and proof.

The *Informations Pax* furnish other examples of deliberate falsifications. Thus the under officer Adolf F. Schmidt tells in a letter addressed to his parents of an attempt at poisoning from which only his prudence had saved his men and himself. When an enquiry was made he retracted his statement, and admitted its falsity (see p. 97). The motive of this falsification is easy to penetrate. It is of a kind different from that already considered. It consists essentially of a desire to occupy a prominent position, to attract attention by claiming an association with some remarkable incident.

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None of these stories owes its falsity, any more than does unconscious distortion, to free individual fantasy. The elements of them are all alike derived from the complex of fixed ideas and prejudices common to the generality of them, and their inspiration is closely dependent on these. Certain deliberate falsifications are only the *mise-en-scène* of the elaborations which the narrator indulges in. The study of them deals with the transmission of legends and their variation; it belongs to another chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### TRANSMISSION AND DIFFUSION OF THE LEGENDS

#### SECTION I. ORAL TRANSMISSIONS

Soldiers returning from the front—Prestige of the first of the wounded—Solicitations of popular curiosity—Stories by convalescents in public places.

At the time of the invasion of Belgium, it was the German army which, as we have seen, constituted the chief breeding ground for legendary stories. These were disseminated with great rapidity, among the troops; the *liaison* officers, the dispatch-riders, the food convoys, the victualling posts assured the diffusion of them.

"Most unfounded rumours," someone wrote to the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, "circulate on the frontier" (see p. 162). "We have already heard," a soldier recounts, "that civilians in ambush have fired upon our comrades who

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have gone forward" (see p. 164). "We have sufficiently commented on the dangers surrounding isolated detachments in Belgium," a Saxon officer notes in his route-book (see p. 164).

It seems, indeed, that accepting without question the earlier stories, the officers in command have warned the troops against attacks by the civilian population, thus contributing to the extension and the accrediting of the stories.

Thus Captain Höcker, for example, received a mission "to purge of *francs-tireurs* the country stretching as far as the Meuse" (see p. 190).

These stories were not delayed in reaching Germany. As in most wars it was the returning soldiery who were responsible for the transmission of them.

From the first day of hostilities in enemy territory the fighting troops were in constant touch with those behind them. Through the frontier towns there was a continual passage of convoys, returning empty, or loaded with prisoners and wounded. These last, together

with the escorting soldiers, were immediately surrounded and pressed for news by an eager crowd. It is they who brought the first stories.

On the morning of August 7th, the fourth day of hostilities, the *Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger* informed its readers:

“The first of the wounded arrived yesterday in the neighbouring town of Eupen: foot soldiers who have been the victims of a perfidious attack by hostile civilians in the village of Soiron, near Verviers. As is officially announced, friends of France have fired in the darkness from an ambush upon the German troops. A captain and fourteen men have been killed, twenty-four men have been wounded. The burgomaster of Soiron and another inhabitant of the village suspected of complicity have been arrested and taken to Eupen. They will be condemned by military law.

“Three *francs-tireurs* have already been shot.”

In No. 719, August 13, 1914, the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* tells in these terms the story of the pretended “atrocities at Liège”:

“Wounded returning from the fighting around Liège give the following account of their adventures:

“‘People have no idea of the way in which the inhuman inhabitants of Liège have cast aside restraint. When, after a short combat, we entered the town we were welcomed by the women with Hurrahs! At the same time the frightened populace displayed at the windows flags, linen towels, etc., and waved them in order to make us believe that they were animated by pacific sentiments, that they asked mercy and wished to show it. But this was only base perfidy, for hardly had we passed the houses when a fusillade from the windows took place and surprised us from behind. They fired also through ventilators at our legs.’

“‘By my side,’ a wounded man relates, ‘one of my comrades fell with a bullet in his leg. He was not able to drag himself away. Immediately a band of the lowest of the populace threw itself upon him and—it is unpleasant to say it, but it is the simple truth—one of them sawed both his legs with a big saw, such as is used for wood. I saw it again when we returned.’

“Another wounded man gives the following account of the battle-field before Liège:



“‘We had settled down for the night and were sleeping on our camp beds. Suddenly we were awakened by rifle firing, but the firers, so far as we could see, were in German uniforms, so that we thought that there was a mistake and called to them. They continued to fire and we soon saw from the wounds and from the projectiles that it was with Belgian and not with German bullets that we had to do. We saw then that our adversaries had put on German uniforms in order to deceive us.’ As proof, the narrator shows Belgian and German bullets. The former are shorter, thicker, and blunter. The slender German projectile when it strikes an enemy simply puts him out of action, while the Belgian one inflames the wounds. Some of our soldiers even say that they have seen explosive bullets used. This reminds one of the famous dum-dum bullets of earlier wars. We are only able to accept this statement provisionally.

“That many women have perfidiously taken part in the fighting at Liège is explained by the fact that many of them work in the armament factories of the town and that the rifle and its management are familiar to them. That they have also poured boiling water on our troops as they passed has

already been mentioned in our morning edition, No. 718."

The legendary character of these stories by the wounded is obvious from the first and need not be insisted on. One may, however, point out that the early days of the German occupation of Liège were absolutely calm. The first incident between the troops and the people occurred on the night of August 20th and 21st, yet the article in the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* reporting these street fights is dated August 13th.

Two Swedish ladies have published in the *Dagens Nyheter*, a Stockholm paper, articles which make the rôle played in the transmission of stories by the wounded no less evident. The declaration of war surprised them in a little village near Aix-la-Chapelle. A German propagandist publication entitled: *Das Schwarzbuch der Schandtaten unserer Feinde, herausgegeben vom kriegspolitischen Kultur-Ausschuss der Deutsch-nordischen Richard Wagner-Gesellschaft für germanische Kunst und Kultur mit einem Nachwort vom Freiherrn Marschall von*

*Bieberstein* (Berlin, Wilhelm Borngräber Verlag, 1915), has reproduced their testimony in these words:

“When hostilities commenced, the great transport of troops soon created two currents flowing in opposite directions; among them trains carrying the wounded to the frontier. The hospitals of the town were devoted to the army’s need. The stories told there by wounded Germans were such as one is hardly able to repeat. Almost all the Germans had been wounded by *francs-tireurs*. Among the wounded were members of ‘Jungdeutschland’ [corresponding to the British boy-scouts] whose ears had been cut off by Belgian women. In the Belgian town of Demenis(?), the Germans had assembled in a certain place twelve men seriously injured. Soon after the orderlies had quitted them in order to find some smoothly running automobiles in which to put them, several Belgian women appeared with their children. They poured petrol on the clothing and the faces of the wounded. Belgians had displayed the Red Cross flag at many of their windows. The Germans carried their wounded there without suspicion. When the orderlies were absent, the Belgian women threw the defenceless wounded

out of the windows. Madame Waldner affirms that she could tell of a great number of similar episodes." (Pp. 95 and 96.)

The *Informations Pax* have gathered yet other cases of oral transmission. There is, for instance, that of the soldier who in a beer-house in the environs of Aix-la-Chapelle told the story of the clinic in which were being nursed twenty-eight men, whose eyes had been torn out in Belgium. There is also a conversation overheard in a tram at Aix-la-Chapelle in which a soldier of the Landsturm spoke of Belgian priests made prisoners for having taken part in hostilities; and again, the other conversation, heard in a railway carriage, in reference to the promise of "the kingdom of heaven" for a murder.

Certain German journals, in which mistrust had been aroused, themselves informed their readers how through the agency of soldiers legendary stories were spread abroad among the public.

The *Kölnische Volkszeitung* in particular, being concerned to disprove certain fables, pub-

lished in its issue No. 811, September 16, 1914, an article in which the variations which a story undergoes in transmission are well shown. Under the title "Lies and Legends of the War," it expresses itself in these words:

"The lies and legends of the war are not extirpated; they continue to grow and this particularly because the wounded and the men in charge of them are returning in great numbers from the theatre of war. Our brave soldiers are living in the midst of conflict; they are separated from us so completely that we know nothing of those who are taking part in the war—at any rate for weeks after. There, as with us, hearsay, confusion, and generalization play a great rôle to the detriment of objective truth.

"Here are some examples:

"About a fortnight ago wounded arrived in a town on the Rhine from Belgium. Five of them who did not belong to the same regiment, who did not even travel in the same railway compartment, immediately asked if it was true that there were eighty thousand wounded in Cologne. There were in fact hardly any wounded in the city apart from cases in private care, but those who asked the

question were incredulous when they were told this and when they saw how surprised we were at this extraordinary idea. Where had they picked up such a story? Everybody was talking about it on the journey. It had been said many times that at such or such a place an entire regiment had been destroyed. As a matter of fact, this regiment did not belong to the army in question and had not taken part in the fighting referred to. How had the legend arisen? It had been assumed in the garrisons in peace time that the regiment would be concerned in this attack, the rest was purely an effort of the imagination.

"As a silent listener, seated on the boulevards, I have noted how curious people, men and women, question the wounded who are resting there, suggesting to them answers to enquiries on the subject of the battles, the losses, and the atrocities of war; how they interpret silence as an affirmative answer and how they wish to have confirmed things always more terrible. I am convinced that shortly afterwards they will repeat the conversation, adding that they have heard it as the personal experience of somebody present at the affair.

"It is in this way that these untruths are

unjustly put to the credit of our soldiers, even if *miles gloriosus* is able to resist the temptation of serving up sensational news and shocking histories of the war to a foolish public which shows a taste only for silly exaggerations.

"If a story is received with scepticism it is supported by invoking some authority. When the first engagements between the German and the English cavalry advanced guards took place, a man appeared, enthusiastic, with this news:

"'A great number of the English have been taken prisoners, including General French.'

"There was great joy in the crowd together with, in isolated instances, serious doubt.

"Do you believe that the Commander-in-Chief would be assisting in an affair of advanced guards, for there has been nothing more up to the present?

"Yesterday an officer passed this way and he told us of it from his compartment.

"And what an officer says must be the truth! If we had, indeed, captured French, we should have heard of it long ago through the special editions. But all this counted for nothing.

"For the time being French was a pris-

oner. These are some actual cases and it would be easily possible to add to them. Let us not lose our calmness and our critical spirit and let us deal firmly with the inventors of histories and the unscrupulous people who transmit them. There is nothing good to be said for these extravagances which are, on the contrary, only likely to cause unrest. Think of the effect of stories of enormous German losses. We ought to keep our mental balance."

Thus, while the convalescents, the first of the wounded, sunned themselves on the public promenades, they were the objects of popular attention and curiosity. The war was still fresh; their arms in slings, their painful progress with the help of sticks, did not fail to stir the emotions of those about them; the blood they had shed gave dignity to them; they were almost the objects of a cult; they symbolized their country. Groups assembled round the seats they had taken. They had to relate their adventures to a public eager for heroic exploits.

But the facts of war are not all of an epic character; many of the wounded have seen nothing in any way remarkable. Are they



going to disappoint their auditors? Centres of attention, raised to a glorious eminence, can they resist the temptation to retain their hold on public interest by enlarging on the perils they have faced and adding to them extraordinary circumstances? Will not their minds be naturally directed to the legendary accounts which they have heard at the front? Egged on by pressing questions will they not be inclined to fall back on these, adapting them to their own cases and attributing to themselves a prominent rôle?

In their oral form, stories of this kind are not definite, their substance is malleable; they can be modified according to the taste of the narrator; they transform themselves; they evolve. To sum up, not only do the soldiers, returned from the field of battle, ensure the transmission of the stories, they also elaborate them.

## SECTION 2. WRITTEN TRANSMISSION

Letters from the front—*Feldpostbriefe*—Reproduction in the press—Absence of criticism by the journals concerned—Collections of *Feldpostbriefe*; chronicles of the events of the war—Works of the imagination: novels and romances.

The military post links the campaigning army

directly with Germany. The soldiers write home, and in their letters they tell of their adventures, which people are eager to hear, and naturally they include the rumours current among the troops. Thus a soldier of the Landsturm writes to his wife that he has seen at Liège a dozen priests condemned to death because they put a price on the heads of German soldiers; he had also seen there civilians who had cut off the breasts of a Red Cross nurse (see p. 39). Again, a Hessian schoolmaster tells in a letter how his detachment had been treacherously attacked at Ch . . . by the inhabitants with the curé at their head (see p. 51).

Submitted to the test of the German military enquiry these stories are shown to be without foundation. Received from the front and narrated by a soldier who professes to have been an eyewitness, they are nevertheless clothed in the public view with special authority. They impose on public credulity, and are soon spread from place to place. The newspapers have opened their columns with eagerness to letters from the front communicated by their readers.

The *Hessische Schulzeitung*, for example, reproduced the letter of the Hessian teacher. Thus the stories brought by the military post soon flooded the district around their destination.

By multiplying copies of the letters by the thousand the press extends their diffusion to an entire region, perhaps to the whole of Germany.

It is not without interest to note here that the earliest of these accounts, which had reached Belgium by the agency of the neutral press, were reproduced in good faith by some organs in spite of their obvious improbability to any one possessing an intimate knowledge of the Belgian character. It was in this way that the legendary combat at Herstal appeared, notably in the *Burgerwelzijn* (No. 95), a small sheet published in Bruges, and in *Le Petit Belge* (August 13, 1914), published at Brussels, derived from an article in the number for August 7, 1914, of *De Telegraaf*, an Amsterdam paper.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A pamphlet entitled *Die Franktireurkrieg in Belgien. Geständnisse der Belgischen Presse* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1915), by an anonymous author, reproduces some articles from the Belgian press recounting imaginary episodes of the *francs-tireurs*. The article in the *Petit Belge*

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This is a characteristic episode. Two thousand German soldiers who had reached the arms factory at Herstal had been received with a hail of bullets.

"All the houses, even the smallest, had been converted into veritable fortresses." Barricades had been erected in the streets. The women and children kept the combatants supplied with munitions. Repulsed at first the Germans returned to the charge; then "the women poured boiling oil and water upon the soldiers, who rolled on the ground, howling with pain."

However, these accounts appeared in Belgium too extraordinary not to awaken mistrust, and the opportunities for checking them were too numerous to allow their legendary character to escape discovery for long. As soon as communications were re-established, it was learned that nothing whatever had happened at Herstal, that this locality had suffered no injury, that there had not been a fight there. In a word,

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on the legendary combat at Herstal is reproduced in facsimile in the pamphlet by Dr. Max Kuttner, *Deutsche Verbrechen?* p. 15 (Bielefeld und Leipzig, Verlag von Velhagen und Klasing, 1915).

the conditions in Belgium were unfavourable to the propagation of legends of this sort.

It was otherwise in Germany, but certain German newspapers, aroused by the implication of sectarian interests, saw the danger attending the dissemination of these stories by the press.

"The newspapers have not an easy task in these days," said, for instance, the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* in No. 737, August 19, 1914, "not only because they are unable to print many things which are both true and interesting, though military considerations forbid their publication, but still more because they are encumbered with news and contributions the reproduction of which would deceive the public.

"Many papers have asked their readers to communicate letters and cards from those at the front, or who, on their way to the front, are in a position to make observations worthy of record. The *Kölnische Volkszeitung* has, owing to the gratifying response of its readers to this request, been able to publish, wholly or in part, a complete series of valuable accounts.

"The editors have good reason to examine many stories very critically, especially when

they do not emanate from entirely trustworthy persons and when they are not the observations of qualified persons known to occupy a responsible position; they have to separate the grain from the chaff.

"Evidently, it is necessary at the outset to put aside anything which falls within the scope of the interdict which the military authorities have rightly placed upon information of military value. In this domain the papers have under the influence of circumstances already attained to a sufficient degree of care. One no longer hears of the threat of proceedings for publishing matter likely to be injurious to military interests.

"But a new danger has arisen. The editors are inundated with news which they are themselves unable to check in any way and the authors of which they have no means of submitting to enquiries as to their powers of observation and their love for the truth.

"Persons related to these authors send letters and cards without, naturally, being themselves in a position to give any guarantee whatever as to their accuracy. Such people often ask that their statements shall be published without alteration and the editors have then to display an even greater spirit of criticism. Judging from our experience a

great number of *canards* have already found their way into many journals. They are not all, perhaps even the majority are not, the result of bad intentions. Their authors are usually in a state of great excitement, easily understood, and their imagination, for that reason, has frequently embellished the events in a romantic fashion. That happens easily enough. Even in ordinary circumstances a narrator is often inclined, in order to make his story interesting, to arrange and ornament it a little. How much more likely is this to happen in time of war and especially in such a time of war as the present. All sorts of exaggerations spring from this source, though there is already a good deal of improvement in this respect. It is unhappily the sad truth that a great number of shocking atrocities have been committed, especially shortly after the entry of the German troops into Belgium: atrocities before which one would wish to hide one's face and which have received, in the most legitimate fashion, the most rigorous and pitiless chastisement. But the picture of the Belgian populace which one obtains in this way is, happily, not exact. This applies even to the inhabitants of the town of Liège of whom there are reported many beautiful traits of humanity and of

a Christian love for one's neighbour. So we are told by a man of the utmost integrity who was in Liège during the twelve days of the critical epoch and who, having been in an official position, has been able to make the most precise observations.

"Numerous communications are equally obviously imaginary. We can identify the seal of invention upon a considerable number of stories printed in the papers.

"All sorts of motives are in evidence. Here it is the desire to brag; there, perhaps, an attempt at a journalistic 'scoop.' Any editor can testify how frequently that sort of thing happens even in ordinary times.

"For the newspapers, then, the proverb 'Look before you leap' applies more than ever; we are bound to publish only that which appears to us worthy of credit on account of the personality of the writer or for other sufficient reasons. Notwithstanding all we can do, articles which it would have been better to ignore may get into our columns. We shall continue to keep an eye on the future. We can only again ask our numerous readers to give us the benefit of interesting communications which they receive, and, as far as possible, to check their accuracy in the first place, and to allow us to exercise



a similar control. In war-time as at other times the truth is the best way. The superior command of our army renders homage to this principle and the press will do well to follow the example set it."

The majority of the press not having the same reasons for prudence as the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* was far from acting with such circumspection. The Catholic organ of Cologne itself supplied the proof of the complete absence of control and criticism which the newspapers—even an official sheet—displayed in the reproduction of soldiers' letters. It published, in its No. 813, September 16, 1914, under the title, "An Attempt to Clear up the Stories of Brigandage which are in Circulation," the following article:

"We received from Viersen on September 15, 1914, the following letter from a reader of the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*:

"To the Editor of the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, Cologne.

"When you published in your paper the first article on the story about a monastery which appeared in the *Tägliche Rundschau*

(it dealt with the supposed slaying of German soldiers in a monastery at Louvain, presumably by the monks),<sup>1</sup> I immediately wrote to that journal to enquire the name of the monastery and of the superior and for at least some precise information which would enable me to check the accuracy of the statement.

““I wished to know if the paper had published such an article without any semblance of truth. Here is the reply:

“““In reply to your enquiry we regret to inform you that we are unfortunately not in a position to tell you anything more definite about the Louvain monastery. The news has been reproduced by all the papers in Berlin and was published, so far as we know, in the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*. That paper may perhaps be able to tell you something more about the matter.”

““Thereupon I wrote in the same sense to the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* which sent me a cutting from the paper with this comment:

“““Unfortunately we are unable at the moment to add anything to this account. Please enquire of the Imperial German Government at Brussels.”

““Thus both journals have not only given

<sup>1</sup> See in regard to this the results of the enquiry made by the German military authorities, pp. 89-92.

without proof imaginary stories of atrocities but they have equally taken no trouble to ascertain the truth. I enclose the original of these letters, which please return. You may make any use of this you wish.'"

Welcomed without control by the press the stories recounted in letters from the front appear, however, in the eyes of the readers of a paper clothed with a new authority—that which attaches to printed matter. They lose in the columns of a paper their individual and particular character. Those who send them have, as the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* notes, usually effaced all personal allusions. The statements thus obtain a substance and an objectivity of which they would otherwise be devoid. Mixed with authentic news they are accepted by the public without mistrust. Is not their appearance in the paper a guarantee of accuracy?

Besides imposing itself on public credulity the printed story fixes itself in the mind. It takes a lasting form. It has entered permanently into consciousness and, more, it has become a source of reference.

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This world war has stimulated in most of the belligerent countries the production of an extraordinary abundance of books, and Germany assuredly takes first place in this respect.

The collection of works relating to the war in the German libraries (*Die Kriegsliteratur-Sammlung der deutschen Bücherei*) amounted at the end of 1914, according to the *Kölnische Zeitung* (No. 458, May 6, 1915), to 1836 publications.

A certain number among those devoted to military events relate the impressions and the personal adventures of their authors. Such, for instance, is the story of the fighting round Liège (*Aus den Kämpfen um Lüttich von einem Sanitätssoldaten*) already mentioned. Others collect in volume form articles published separately in the press, e. g., the little book by Captain Höcker (*An der Spitze meiner Kompagnie*).<sup>1</sup>

The most numerous works, however, attempt

<sup>1</sup> See also, among others: Korthauer, *Erlebnisse eines freiwilligen Feldgeistlichen* (Buchhandlung der nass. Colportage-verlag, 20 Pfg.); *Kriegsfreiwilliger. Erlebnisse eines Primaners* (Verlagshaus für Volksliteratur und Kunst); Willig und Heinrich: *Marsch! Marsch! Hurra! Erlebnisse zweier Kriegsfreiwilliger im Weltkrieg 1914* (Berlin, A. Weichert, M. 1.20).

to retrace the events of the campaign by drawing upon information already published in great part by the press. In this category, fall a considerable number of chronicles, anecdotal histories, and documents in which their authors have recorded important incidents of the war (*Kriegs-Chronike*, *Feldzugs-Chronike*, *Kriegs-Tagebücher*, etc.). Letters from the front constitute for the authors of these productions the most fruitful source. They have utilized it freely.

In some cases the letters of soldiers have simply been bound together in volume form. Such for example are the following: *Der deutsche Krieg in Feldpostbriefen herausgegeben von Joachim Delbrück. Erster Band: Lüttich, Namur, Antwerpen. Mit einer Einleitung von General-leutnant z. D. Imhoff* (München, Georg Müller); the German War as told in letters from the front.

HANZ LEITZEN, *Der grosse Krieg in Feldpostbriefen* (Wolfenbüttel, J. Zwissler, 1914).

*Deutsche Feldpost-Briefe. Schilderungen und Berichte vom Völkerkrieg 1914* (Chemnitz, H. Thümmler).

*Feldpost-Briefe 1914. Berichte und Stimmungsbilder von Mitkämpfern und Miterlebtern.* Herausgegeben von Sparr (Leipzig, O. Spamer, M. 2.50).

*Das deutsche Feldzugsbüchlein 1914. Kriegschronik, Feldzugsbriefe.* I. Teil bis zum Fall von Antwerpen (Gotha, F. A. Perthes, 1 Mk).

*Deutsches Heldenbuch 1914. Feldpostbriefe, wahre Erlebnisse und Erzählungen von Kriegsschauplatz in Ost und Westen* (Stuttgart, P. Mahler, M. 1.50).

*Im Feuer. Heldentaten, Feldbriefe, Soldatenhumor* (Schuster L., 2 M.).

*Liebes Vaterland magst ruhig sein. Feldbriefe unserer Offiziere, Aerzte und Soldaten* (Heiller, E. Salzer).

*Briefe aus dem Felde 1914-1915. Im Auftrage der Zentralstelle zur Sammlung von Feldpostbriefen im märkischen Museum zu Berlin herausgegeben von Pniower, Schuster, Sternfeld, U. A.* (Oldenburg, G. Stallung's Verlag).

*Das deutsche Herz. Feldpostbriefe unserer Helden. Gesammelt und herausgegeben von Krach* (Berlin, A. Scherl, 2 M.).

PFLANZ, *Aus der Fremde in die Heimat.*

*Feldpostbriefe eines freiwilligen Feldpredigers* (Liegn., H. Krumbhaan, 1 M.).

SCHWEDER, *Im kaiserlichen Hauptquartier. Deutsche Kriegsbriefe* (Hesse und B. Verlag, M. 2.50).

*100 Briefe aus dem Felde. Wie die Soldaten über den Krieg erzählen* (Fränk. Verlags-Anstalt und Buchdruckerei, M. 1.20).

HEYMANN, *Unsere feldgrauen Helden. Aus Tagebüchern und Briefen* (Réclam. Universal-Bibliothek, 20 Pfg.).

PAULS, *Aus eiserner Zeit 1914. Briefe aus dem Felde. Gesammelt und herausgegeben* (Elmsh. J. M. Groth, 2 M.).

QUENZEL, *Vom Kriegsschauplatz. Feldpostbriefe und andere Berichte von Mitkämpfern und Augenzeugen* (Hesse und B. Verlag, M. 1.50).

WECHSLER, *Du, Heimat, musst uns bleiben. Soldatenbriefe und Gedichte von der Grenzbesetzung* (Schaffhausen, P. Meili, 80 Pfg.).<sup>1</sup>

To the same category belongs a classic work:

<sup>1</sup> For the bibliography of the war one may consult: *Die deutsche Kriegsliteratur. Teildruck aus dem Register zu Hinrichs, Halbjahrs-Katalog der im deutschen Buchhandel erschienenen Bücher, Zeitschriften, Lankarten, u. s. w.* (Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs'schen Buchhandlung).

*Kriegslesebuch über den Krieg von 1914. Die besten Kriegserzählungen aus deutschen, österreichischen und schweizerischen Zeitungen. Als Vorlesebuch für den Schulgebrauch herausgegeben von Dr. Alwin Wunsche Lehrer in Leipzig. Sechstes bis achstes Tausend (Leipzig, Friedrich Brandstetter, 1915, 2 Bd.).*

This, as its title indicates, is composed of a selection of stories about the war which have appeared in the newspapers. Its author is a school-teacher and it is intended to serve as a reading book in the lower grades of education. It is a response to a circular of the Prussian Ministry of Education directing the teachers of the lower and middle standards to call attention during school hours to the great deeds of the German army. In the preface to the second volume the author insists upon the utility of the book not only as a text-book for the teacher but especially as a manual for the scholars (so-called *Klassenlektüre*).

The original part is, in the case of other authors, more important: the stories of the combatants are co-ordinated and used as the basis of a history. This is notably the case



with the book written by Major von Strantz, *Die Eroberung Belgiens 1914. Selbsterlebtes. Nach Berichten von Feldzugsteilnehmern zusammengestellt und bearbeitet* (Minden i. W., Verlag Wilhelm Köhler, 1914).

Although there is a suggestion of personal experiences this is only true in the sense that it has been collected and edited from the stories of combatants. In the preface the author declares that he has compiled his book from statements from the journals and reviews which have supplied him with his historical basis.

The work of Lieutenant W. von Trotha, *Mit den Feldgrauen nach Belgien hinein. Kriegserlebnisse und Schilderungen* (Leipzig, Hesse und Becker Verlag, 1915), is conceived in the same spirit. "The incidents of the conquest of Belgium," the author says in his preface, "are here described in chronological order on the foundation of the literature which has already appeared, and if so many accounts by combatants are included, it is to make the reader understand the way in which such a combat of giants develops, for no one can describe

this struggle in a more vivid fashion than the man who has himself fought in the first line."

"The journals and reviews of all the countries concerned,<sup>1</sup> private communications worthy of confidence, letters from the fronts, etc., will collectively present historical truth as in the magnificent work by Joseph Kurschner: *La grande guerre de 1870-71*."

Many works prepared by the same method and with the same materials might be cited. The following examples will serve:

W. KOTZDE, *Von Lüttich bis Flandern, Belgien, 1914. Mit sechs Vollbildern und reichem Buchschmuck von Hans Baluschek, und einer Reliefkarte des westlichen Kriegsschauplatzes* (Weimar, Gustav Kiepenheuer).

FROBENIUS, *Durch Not und Tod. Schilderungen aus dem Weltkrieg 1914* (Wien, F. Tempsky, Leipzig, F. Freytag, 1 M.).

KRIEGK, *Der Krieg 1914. Aus die Weser-Zeitung zusammengestellt* (Bremen, C. Schönmann).

All this literature derives its sustenance from

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Lüttich, Krieg und Sieg, 1914, nach Berichten der Zeitgenossen*. Berlin-Leipzig, Hermann Hillger Verlag.

stories by soldiers. It collects them chiefly from the press where the greater part of them have received their first consecration. It gathers them in without criticism, appropriates them, and grows with the help of their authority. A new stage in their evolution is thus reached. At first a simple rumour transmitted from mouth to mouth and susceptible of many variations, the story becomes crystallized in a written version, it acquires objectivity in a text printed and multiplied by the press; it materializes finally in a book.

One finds under this form, clothed with new prestige and indifferent to public refutation, the legendary developments and the different thematic motives already defined. That of treacherous acts (see the denials of the Prussian military authority, pp. 17-37) figures, for example, in the letter of the staff surgeon, Wilke Platz, cited in Major von Strantz's book:

"From the church tower the curé watched the route. Immediately the Germans approached he telephoned to the enemy batteries and these fired on the place." (P. 71.)

The same letter appears in *Das Schwarzbuch der Schandtaten unserer Feinde* (p. 103).

Lieutenant von Trotha repeats this story of espionage practised by priests on church towers in more detail. He not only indicates the source of it; he locates it in the environs of Antwerp.

A superior officer, rendered suspicious by the precision of the fire of the Belgian artillery, sends patrols to explore the neighbourhood. One of them arrives at the village church.

“‘Ah! we can do no good here,’ said one of the soldiers and he wished to pass on.

“‘That does not seem to me quite so certain. Since the attack of Louvain, in which the priests participated with so much zeal, it seems to me prudent to keep an eye on these gentry.’

“‘By Jove! here is a wire,’ cries another soldier of the patrol. ‘It does not seem to me to be a lightning conductor. Come here!’

“‘The others approach.

“‘No, into the church,’ orders the chief of the patrol. The door was forced and what a spectacle offered itself to the gaze of the men as they penetrated into the church.

"The pastor was seated at a telephone and directing the fire of the Belgian artillery! He was promptly dragged away from his apparatus, and the military tribunal soon sentenced him. The church was set on fire and *M. le curé* was soon suspended between heaven and earth."<sup>1</sup> (P. 197.)

The theme of treacherous attacks is found in most of the books devoted to the invasion of Belgium.

"The people help the army," writes Major von Strantz; "there is not an inhabitant but has a rifle in his cupboard, and even the women and young girls handle revolver and pistol, to say nothing of sharpened knives, while in the kitchens vessels of boiling water are always kept ready with which to welcome Germans." (P. 17.)

The same author reports numerous examples of similar attacks. A pamphlet entitled *Die belgischen Greuelthaten gegen die Deutschen; der Franktireurskrieg und die Verwendung von Dum-Dum Geschossen im Krieg 1914. Amtliche und*

<sup>1</sup> This story has many interesting resemblances to the episode recounted by Captain Heubner (see above, pp. 206-209).

*glaubwürdige Berichte* (Leipzig, Gustav Zehrfeld, p. 35), as also the *Feldpost-Briefe* edited by Herm. Sparr (p. 14), describe, according to the version of the advocate Alexander Berg in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the revolt of the populace of Andenne, where the priest gave the signal by ringing a bell in the streets (see *supra*, p. 64).

The *Kriegslesebuch* of the teacher Alwin Wünsche reproduced the same story (vol. i., p. 41); it includes also (p. 31) scenes of *francs-tireurs* abstracted from the little book entitled *Aus den Kämpfen um Lüttich von einem Sanitäts-soldaten*, of which we have noted the legendary tendency (see *supra*, pp. 146-147).

The typical episode of the machine-guns placed upon the belfries, of which R. P. Duhr has so completely exposed the imaginary character (see *supra*, p. 67), figures in Hans Leitzen's *Der grosse Krieg in Feldpost-Briefen* (p. 83), in Pauls' *Aus eiserner Zeit* (p. 89), in von Trotha, *Mit den Feldgrauen nach Belgien hinein* (p. 103). That of the fifty bodies of German soldiers found in the cellar of a monastery in Louvain (see *supra*, p. 89) appears

in von Strantz, *Die Eroberung Belgiens* (p. 108), and in *Das Schwarzbuch der Schandtaten unserer Feinde* (p. 110).

The "atrocities" motive is found no less frequently in spite of the decisive enquiries of which the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* and *Vorwärts* have published the results (see *supra*, pp. 84-117).

"Hardly had the horses galloped away," writes, for instance, Lieutenant von Trotha in *Mit den Feldgrauen nach Belgien hinein*, "than the inhabitants, particularly the women, precipitated themselves upon the defenceless wounded and—one's hair rises and a holy anger reddens one's face with indignation—instead of raising carefully, in a truly feminine and amiable way, the poor groaning German soldiers and instead of caring for them and dressing their wounds, these furies commenced to ill-treat them and mutilate them in a bestial manner." (P. 50.)

The pamphlet devoted to Liège, *Lüttich, Krieg und Sieg 1914*, speaks of the "hyenas of the battle-field."

"To-day we have taken a young boy who had in his pocket fourteen fingers cut off

with rings upon them. The eyes of the wounded are torn out and their arteries cut." (P. 23.)

Further on a company commander—repeating the story disproved so frequently and so categorically (see *supra*, pp. 100-101) of the wounded in the hospitals at Aix-la-Chapelle whose eyes had been removed—expresses himself in the following terms:

"Again to-day combats are raging in the streets with the populace. Our business is not with an honourable enemy but with hideous beasts. Here are some examples: About thirty officers and soldiers with their eyes torn out are in a field hospital at Aix-la-Chapelle. Officers who were billeted in the families of counts and princes and had been invited by them to dinner were roughly attacked at table and fired upon. It is all simply horrible, worse than the epoch of the Thirty Years' War." (Pp. 23 and 24.)

The stories about the use of poison (see *supra*, pp. 94-97) have not escaped the author.

"The war correspondent of the B. T. took part in the following incident. At the



central post-office of Liège there were hundreds of thousands of letters and circulars which had been delivered before the arrival of the Germans.

"It has been shown that an innumerable quantity of these letters enclosed a narcotic powder. The officer of the guard has closed the post-office, for it has become impossible to remain there. The Belgians have thus used means of which the reprehensible character and the perfidy could not be surpassed." (P. 23.)

The same pamphlet, not recoiling before the grotesque, tells of the employment by the Belgian populace of a new arm—hives!

"A Berliner recounts in a letter from the front: 'After different villages had been burnt the attitude of the inhabitants was modified. They abandoned their method of fighting: by this I mean the throwing from windows of hives filled with bees. Now they are trying amiability.' "

Finally, *Das Schwarzbuch der Schandtaten unserer Feinde* reports (p. 106) that "a war correspondent saw at Namur hundreds of packets of cigarettes bearing the inscription

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'Souvenir of Belgium' and containing, among the tobacco, a charge of powder intended to burn the eyes of the soldiers" (see *supra*, the formal denial in *Vorwärts*, p. 109).

All these pseudo-historical publications are, however, only one aspect of the abundant literary production of the "Great War."

All the varieties of popular literature, the romances of cloak and sword, the stories of adventure, the collections of news and anecdotes, the theatre itself are in turn devoted to military events. The great public loves lively activity, extraordinary situations, and sensational circumstances calculated to strike the imagination and cause a shiver of horror.

The legendary developments to which the German invasion of Belgium gave birth furnished in this respect matter particularly fruitful. They are full of surprises, ambushes, treacherous attacks, treasons, mutilations, unheard-of atrocities, Machiavellian enterprises. They correspond, for war-time, to the stories of apaches which in peace-time are in such great demand among the lower classes.

More, they constitute the sole preoccupation

of some spirits; they alone are able to fix the attention; in seeking among them the subjects of their books the makers of romances are only obeying the vogue of the moment.

So one finds in this literature of the lower classes the principal legendary episodes of which we have studied the origin and followed the development; accommodated to a fiction, woven into a web of intrigue they have undergone new transformations; they have lost every indication of their source; they are transposed in the new circumstances imagined for them; they have usually been dissociated from the circumstances which individualize them and fix their time and place. The thematic motives from which they spring nevertheless remain clearly recognizable.

Thus Richard Sexau, in his novel, *Blut and Eisen*, depicts a fight in which German troops are involved in a village defended by enemy forces and concealed *francs-tireurs*.

A machine-gun is in action on a church tower; it is the centre of the resistance; but one of the heroes of the story, the German Lieutenant Holk, advances to attack the tower,

mounts to the summit of it, and surprises there a priest who is manipulating the weapon. E. F. Stauffer in *Der Fahnenträger von Verdun*<sup>1</sup> exploits the idea of the treacherous attack. His book is one of the illustrated romances designed for children. The cover shows a German soldier decorated with the iron cross waving in the breeze the imperial standard: in the background flames rise above a town. The eighth chapter is entitled, "In the Village of the *Franco-tireurs*"; the following one, "Expiation." Paul and Henry, two personages in the story, occupy with their detachment the quiet village of Beaulieu. Suddenly, the church clock strikes three; the soldiers raise their eyes; by the clock it is barely half-past two. Before they have recovered from their surprise a fusillade bursts upon them from the houses.

The troops have fallen into an ambush in a village of *franco-tireurs*. A violent combat ensues in the streets. Meanwhile the signals continue from the summit of the tower; the captain appeals for volunteers; Henry and Paul offer themselves; they attack the tower

<sup>1</sup> Berlin und Leipzig. Verlag von A. Anton, 1915.

and capture the offender, the priest of the district. An illustration shows the colonel rewarding the two heroes for their splendid action; he dubs them soldiers of the first class, while the troop with fixed bayonets guard the priest and his parishioners (p. 98). Nanny Lambrecht, in a novel of somewhat higher grade, *Die eiserne Freude* (Berlin, Fleischel), figures similar episodes. Not far from the frontier a young German is affianced to a young Belgian. War occurs and separates them brutally. The fiancé returns to Belgium in the ranks of the invaders. In the house of his betrothed he finds not only enemies but the criminals called *francs-tireurs*. He falls grievously wounded fighting with them.

The penny magazines which are to be obtained at the newspaper kiosks have similarly turned to account, in a still more popular form, the legendary episodes of the war in Belgium.

R. P. Duhr thus describes one of them, *Um Deutschlands Ehre*<sup>1</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> Bd. 32, 10 Pfg., Verlag moderner Lektüre, G. m. b. H., Berlin, S. 14, Dresdnerstrasse 88/89. (Imprimerie P. Lehmann, G. m. b. H., Berlin.)

"The title-page shows a German soldier fighting with a priest. The plot is as follows: A Capuchin monastery near Ramscapele communicates with the enemy by a signal. A lieutenant in charge of a picket enters in search of the offender. When he has entered, the door is secured behind him and after a long interval the superior arrives and the lieutenant is able to make known his errand. The drama reaches its culminating point at the moment when he wishes to leave the monastery.

"The porter says to him: 'You forget, Monsieur, our most rigorous rule—whoever puts himself under the protection of the monastery is not allowed to leave it for twelve hours—the end justifies the means; it is a privilege which His Majesty the King of the Belgians has expressly conferred on Capuchin monasteries.'

"At this moment a scuffle occurs. The 'reverend fathers' beat down two of the German soldiers; one of them is killed, the other only stunned. The rest escape over the garden wall. The Germans attack the monastery, find nobody there, and set it on fire. The priests have escaped by a subterranean communication with the town, destroying on the way the underground

conduit through which 'Roselaere' is supplied with water."

Is there any need to say that the episode is entirely imaginary and that there is no Capuchin monastery at Ramscapelle? The plot of the story borders on the grotesque in a characteristic way. This is only one example. We may mention in further illustration:

HAUSTEIN, *Die Schwester des Franktireurs* (Verlagshaus für Volksliteratur und Kunst, 10 Pfg.).

ENGEL L., *Kriegsflammen. Roman vom belgischen Kriegsschauplatz* (Zehnpfennig-Bibliothek, 252). (Neur., W. W. Klamt.)

Finally, there are in the popular theatre similar productions, as, for instance:

PANNEK, *In Kämpfe mit Franktireurs. Dramatische Szene* (Recklingh., A. Vollmer, 1 M.).

SAGET, *Der Franktireur. Trauerspiel* (Recklinghausen, A. Vollmer, 1 M.).

RENKER, *Der Franktireur, Dramatische Szene* (Kriegstheater, Mülheim i. Th., D. Danner, 75 Pfg.).

RENKER, *Der Franktireur, Lebensbild aus*

*dem Kriege. Vaterländische Theaterstücke* (Leipzig, O. Teich, M. 1.50).

### SECTION 3. TRANSMISSION BY PICTORIAL MEANS

Prints and pictorial post-cards.

A proclamation by the General commanding the 11th Army Corps at Cassel, dated October 15, 1914, reveals a third mode of transmission:

"Recently," it reads, "photographs and picture post-cards representing pretended Belgian priests perpetrating acts of cruelty have been exposed and circulated. Some of these cards bear explanatory descriptions. The truth of the facts represented is not demonstrable. . . ."

The *Informations Pax* have called attention (see *supra*, p. 26) to a picture post-card showing an elderly priest in the midst of a convoy of prisoners and bearing the following descriptive matter:

"French civilians including a Catholic priest, prisoners at Darmstadt. They have attempted to betray the German positions



by means of a subterranean telephone and the dial of the church clock."

Other post-cards showing *francs-tireurs* were displayed at a stationer's shop in Cassel in September, 1914, together with this explanatory notice:

"Belgian *francs-tireurs* including a priest and his sacristan of Louvain (Belgium) were shot on September 9th at Ohrdruf (forty-three persons). The priest incited the inhabitants to fire upon German soldiers and caused machine-guns to be placed on the church tower" (see *supra*, p. 47).

The engravings in most of the books dealing with the military operations in Belgium furnish similar examples of this iconographic transmission. One of them in *Der Fahnen-träger von Verdun* has been already mentioned (p. 254).

Major von Strantz's book, *Die Eroberung Belgiens*, has some which are no less characteristic. On page 37 there is "An Attack by Belgian *Francs-tireurs*." A German provisioning column is surprised while traversing a small town;

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firing is taking place from all the windows, behind closed shutters. Farther on (p. 55) are depicted German soldiers, with their fingers on the triggers of their rifles, looking anxiously in all directions. This picture is called "Search for *Francs-tireurs*." On page 65 two peasants and an old woman are being taken before a firing platoon for execution. On page 73 two *francs-tireurs* are firing from the ventilator of a cellar. On page 79 two soldiers are photographed in the act of firing from a motor-car and this legend is attached:

"German soldiers firing from an automobile on *francs-tireurs*. In crossing Belgian districts, vehicles, especially automobiles, have to pay special attention to *francs-tireurs* and we see in this picture how they defend themselves against Belgians firing at them from behind."

The cover of the book by W. Kotzde, *Von Lüttich bis Flandern*, is decorated in a no less suggestive fashion. It shows in a village street a barricade taken by assault by German soldiers, while near by are the peasants killed with weapons in their hands. Finally the pamphlet,

*Der Weltkrieg 1914, Belgische Kriegsgreuel Verwirrungen menschlicher Scheusale*,<sup>1</sup> is adorned with a vulgar picture representing a man and a woman in ambush behind a thicket and firing upon a German ambulance.

#### SECTION 4. OFFICIAL SANCTION AND ENTRY INTO COLLECTIVE BELIEF

Official notes of August 9, 1914, and 28, 1914—The Chancellor's declaration of September 7, 1914—Message from the Emperor to the President of the United States, September 8, 1914—Absence of critical control—Authority of the legendary stories—Their degree of diffusion—Their assimilation by the popular mind—Their evidential value—Their incorporation in the logical sequence.

Propagated under these different aspects throughout the whole of Germany, the legendary stories of the invasion of Belgium received from the highest authorities in the Empire official approval.

On August 9, 1914, as we have seen, the Wolff Agency published a warning to *francs-tireurs* which was reproduced in the whole press. This was on the 6th day of hostilities in Belgium (see *supra*, pp. 147-149).

On August 14, 1914, the *Norddeutsche All-*

<sup>1</sup> Dresden. Max Fischer's Verlags-buchhandlung.

*gemeine Zeitung* inserted the text of a note of remonstrance addressed by the German Government to that of Belgium:

“Numerous persons,” it is affirmed, “have taken part in the fighting around Liège in civilian clothing. They have not only fired on the German troops, they have also cruelly massacred the wounded, and have assaulted the doctors while these were engaged upon their duties” (see p. 151).

On August 28, 1914, the Wolff Agency communicated to the press a new protest from the German Chief Headquarters, as follows:

“CHIEF HEADQUARTERS,  
“August 28th (W. T. B.).

“The superior command of the German Army protests against the stories circulated by our adversaries as to atrocities committed by the Germans in their conduct of the war. If very severe measures have been rendered necessary they have been provoked and imposed by the participation of the civilian population, including women, in treacherous attacks on our troops and by the bestial cruelties (*bestialische Grausamkeiten*) inflicted on the wounded.

"The responsibility for the rigour which has been introduced into the military operations rests entirely on the Government and the Authorities of the territory occupied by us, who have furnished arms to the inhabitants and have incited them to take part in the war. Wherever the populace has abstained from hostile acts our troops have done no damage, neither to men nor property. The stories circulated by foreign newspapers, according to which the Germans make the civilian population march before them in the fighting, are lies which reveal the moral abasement of their authors. All who know the high cultural development of our people will denounce them as such.

"VON MOLTKE."

A few days afterwards the press (see particularly the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 793, September 8, 1914) reproduced a proclamation of the General commanding the 7th Army Corps in which were formulated anew, in energetic language, the accusations of treacherous attacks and of the murder of wounded:

"It has been brought to my notice," says the General, "that a journal has denounced the

rigorous attitude of the military authorities in regard to the operations of *francs-tireurs* in Belgium, as a manifestation of a simple desire for vengeance and reprisals. The article against which I have, in the execution of my duty, taken measures supplies me with the opportunity of addressing some words of explanation to the populace under the jurisdiction of the 7th Army Corps. The cunning and perfidious attacks which have been directed many times against our troops in the many theatres by the enemy population, impose upon our chiefs an absolute duty to repress without hesitation and with iron rigour these monstrous atrocities. To show weakness here would be to betray our army. We would not touch a hair of peaceable inhabitants of an enemy country; the discipline of our troops, known throughout the world, is a sufficient guarantee of this.

“They fight loyally, soldier against soldier. But if the brave children of our people, who expose themselves to dangers and to death for their country, the wounded, the doctors, the orderlies are miserably butchered in wicked attacks by a populace blind and uncontrolled; if bandits threaten the security of our army from behind, in that case the interests of our very existence compel our military

chiefs to perform the sacred duty of acting with the utmost rigour and the innocent may suffer with the guilty. The Army Command by means of numerous proclamations has made it clear that human life will not be spared in the repression of these atrocities. That houses, flourishing villages, and entire towns may be destroyed is, no doubt, regrettable but should not provoke unjustified emotion. These houses, these villages, these towns are for us not worth the life of a single one of our soldiers. That is evident and it is indeed superfluous to say it.

“(s) FRHR. VON BISSING.”

About the same time, September 6, 1914, the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* published a message addressed by the Chancellor of the Empire to representatives of the United Press and the Associated Press. This message, making allusion to the offences charged against Germany, is expressed in the following terms:

“CHIEF HEADQUARTERS,

“September 2, 1914.

“Your compatriots have been told that the German troops have burnt Belgian villages and towns, but not that young Belgian girls

have torn out the eyes of defenceless wounded upon the field of battle. Communal functionaries in Belgium have invited our officers to dine and have slain them at table. In opposition to all public law the entire civil population of Belgium has intervened: it has attacked our troops from behind; after offering at first a sympathetic welcome it has fought them with hidden weapons. Belgian women have cut the throats of sleeping soldiers to whom they have given hospitality."

Finally, the Emperor William II. addressed to the President of the United States a famous message reproduced below from the *Nord-deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* of September 8, 1914:

"I consider it my duty, Mr. President, to inform you in your capacity as representative of the most eminent principles of humanity, that my troops on taking possession of the fortress of Longwy, found there thousands of dum-dum bullets made in special Government workshops. Similar projectiles have also been found upon wounded soldiers and prisoners belonging to the British Army. It is known that these bullets cause cruel



wounds and the use of them is rigorously forbidden by the sacred principles of international law.

"I therefore send you an indignant protest against this way of conducting the war, which owing to the methods of our adversaries has become one of the most barbarous known to history. The Belgian Government has not only made use of these cruel weapons, but it has openly sanctioned the participation of the Belgian civilian population and for a long time has carefully prepared it. The cruelties perpetrated in this guerilla warfare by women, children, and priests, even upon wounded soldiers, members of the medical staff, and ambulance attendants (doctors have been slain, ambulances have been fired upon), have been such that my generals have finally been compelled to have recourse to the most rigorous methods in order to chastise the offenders and to spread terror through the population thirsting for blood and so turn them from the pursuit of murders and horrors. Many celebrated monuments, even the old city of Louvain, with the exception of the beautiful Hôtel-de-Ville, have been destroyed for the protection of our troops in legitimate defence. My heart bleeds to find such measures rendered necessary and to

think of the innumerable innocents who have lost their lives and property through the barbarous conduct of these criminals!

“(s) WILHELM, I. R.”

Thus the highest ranks in the Empire have given an official sanction to the stories of the popular fury in Belgium. Without submitting them to any control; without subjecting them to any criticism, although their sources were so suspicious; without taking any of the precautions which the effervescence of spirits, the excitation of passions, the natural proliferation of legends in war-time demand, the authorities have accepted in general terms and under their popular forms the principal thematic motives. An august word even affirms, henceforth, that particular one of them of which the legendary character was least doubtful. The Emperor has attested before the face of the whole world the “cruelties perpetrated in this guerilla warfare by women, children, and priests, even upon the wounded.”

This grave accusation involved the clergy in its generality; it raised against them a terrible charge; the German Catholics, whose religious

interests were threatened, were particularly moved by it and the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, representative of a great number of them, asked in measured terms this question<sup>1</sup>:

“Where has our Emperor obtained his information about these cases? Is it from the articles which have appeared in the papers? Or has the superior command of the army indicated to him the precise facts of the particular cases? One must regard the former hypothesis as excluded by the gravity of the matter in question. But if our Emperor has derived his information from reliable sources nobody will be more concerned than the Catholics to give publicity to these particular cases, which, with all the world, we execrate and stigmatize, for it is most important that the whole clergy should not become objects of suspicion and at the same time objects of mistrust, because some among them, whose fault is the greater because of their situation and their high degree of education, have sinned gravely.”

The article then proceeds to show how unlikely is the culpability of the priests and

<sup>1</sup> See No. 801, September 10, 1914.

especially their complicity in atrocities committed upon wounded.

Far from supplying the evidence upon which the head of the State based his condemnation, the military authority suspended the great Catholic newspaper for twenty-four hours for having dared to criticize indirectly the imperial statement. A letter from the General commanding the 8th Army Corps, reproduced without comment at the head of its issue No. 802, September 11, 1914, informed it of the penalty imposed upon it for this grave failure to respect the imperial words, in the following terms:

"8TH ARMY CORPS. GOVERNMENT OF THE FORTIFIED POSITION OF COLOGNE. SECTION N. NO. 320.

"COLOGNE,  
"September 10, 1914.

"To the Editor of the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*,  
Cologne.

"No. 801 of September 10th contains an article entitled, 'Priests and the guerilla warfare in Belgium.' This article contains a criticism of the protestation of His Majesty the Emperor to President Wilson. A criti-

cism of this kind should be judged in the most severe manner and will be welcomed with joy in foreign countries. I therefore suspend the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* for a day: to-morrow, September 11th, the morning and evening editions as well as that of the morning of September 12th will not be allowed to appear.

“V. HELD.”

\* \* \*

This support by the most eminent personage in the country did not fail to assist the dissemination of the stories throughout Germany. In the general ferment minds were given up to the wildest imaginings.

“Everywhere,” wrote a Berlin review, “on the railway, on the trams, in cafés and restaurants, people recount these histories, comment on them, embellish them, and amplify them. Conversations begin with such phrases as: ‘Without doubt . . . one sees clearly how that happens.’ ‘That was to be expected in bigoted Belgium with its innumerable convents.’ ‘Naturally I am not at all astonished, one can easily imagine how that occurred.’ And so on, in a way always more irrational. It is impossible to

imagine all the extravagance. One who hears these stories repeats them omitting the 'probably' or 'without doubt'; the imaginary part thus becomes an established fact in which one puts faith. The credulity of the Berliners, when one serves up to them shocking stories about Catholic priests, attains a degree almost unbelievable. One thinks of the hypnotic effect of all the low class novels which, at the expense of members of the clergy and the Catholic orders, have gratified the need of the public in the capital for sensational and terrifying stories.

"One thinks also of the untiring campaign of calumny systematically carried on in the great Berlin journals against Catholicism in general and against its ministers in particular.

"Here is the most foolish thing I have come across in connection with this matter. A country gentleman—in ordinary times altogether sensible and rational—related in the most serious fashion the following story of murder: A German company was passing through a Belgian village; the curé standing before his church invited the captain to enter the church with his soldiers, for in such grave times it is always well to think of the good God. The captain and a soldier who

had accepted the invitation saw a machine-gun hidden behind the altar.

"This is what the gentleman told me without adding anything more. But for my part I could not help thinking that other persons would complete the story and as a matter of fact it is now being told with the following additions. When the church had been filled the machine-gun would have been promptly unmasked and the entire company destroyed; it goes without saying that the church and the curé would have immediately received a chastisement in accordance with martial law."<sup>1</sup>

The legendary stories have thus attained the last stage of their elaboration and completed their diffusion. They have penetrated not only into the purlieus of the cities but into distant countries; into centres of education as among the popular classes.

Wounded convalescents and soldiers on leave at home for a time have told them to the city man and to the peasant. Both have found them in letters from the front; both have read them in journals and books, both have listened

<sup>1</sup> Cited by R. P. Duhr in *Der Lügegeist*, from the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 808, September 15, 1914.

to the warnings of the Government and to the Imperial word. The school-teacher has mixed these episodes with his teaching; he has nourished with them infantile imaginations. Scholars have read the text of them in their class books and have enacted them in the games inspired by the war; they have told them at home in the family circle, giving them the authority attached to the master's word.

Everywhere these accounts have been the subject of ardent commentaries; in the village, in the councils held upon doorsteps, and in the barrooms of inns; in the big cafés, the trams, and the public promenades of towns. Everywhere they have become an ordinary topic of conversation, everywhere they have met with ready credence. The term *franc-tireur* has become familiar. Its use is general and its acceptance widespread. An English tugboat attacked by a German submarine turns and charges it and the press tells the story under the heading *Die englischen Franktireurs zur See*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Frankfurter Zeitung*, May 27, 1915, 1st edition; see also as regards merchant vessels armed with guns *Berliner Tageblatt* and *Vossische Zeitung* of August 8, 1915.



The word is used to denote a disloyal attitude. An important socialist organ, the *Chemnitzer Volksstimme*, belonging to the larger fraction of the party, designates the members of the opposing group Bernstein-Haase-Kautsky by the name "*Partei-Franktireurs*" (see *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, No. 340, July 7, 1915).

Professor Dr. Ch. H. Becker, alluding in his pamphlet, *Deutschland und der Islam* (Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1914), to the propaganda of the Allies, calls it an intellectual combat of *francs-tireurs*, "*Ein geistiger Franktireurkampf*."<sup>1</sup>

A collection of prayers for the use of the Catholic German soldiers<sup>2</sup> includes this incredible text: "Shame and malediction on him who wishes to act like the Belgian and French, perfidious and cruel, who have even attacked defenceless wounded."

\* \* \*

The legendary stories are gradually fixed in the popular mind which has progressively

<sup>1</sup> R. Rotheit, *Die Friedensbedingungen der deutschen Presse. Los von Reuter und Havas*. Berlin, Puttkammer und Mühlbrecht, 1915, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> P. Athanasius Bierbaum, *Soldaten-Pflichten*, A. Laumann, Dülmen i. W. 1914.

assimilated them. By imperceptible gradations they have become incorporated in the categories of its logic; they appear to it as a reality marked with the seal of evidence, as a phenomenon capable of sensory appreciation and corresponding to the natural order of things.

The conception of the Belgian people prevalent in Germany has undergone a complete modification. The legendary stories have caused new and unsuspected traits to stand out; the sanguinary and perfidious instincts which they seem to put in relief are attributed to the Belgians as distinctive marks of their national character.

There is a tendency, profoundly impressed upon the human mind, to incorporate new ideas with the complex of old ones. Authors, inspired by the scientific spirit, have applied themselves to investigating the aspects hitherto ignored, which they have just observed. They are concerned to show that these aspects, at first unexpected, are, however, neither singular nor surprising, but that they are inherent in the race and that manifestations of them were recognizable even in the distant past. More-

over, they endeavour to prove that, far from contradicting this view, all the earlier facts tend to prove it. Such is, for instance, the object which Geheimer-Regierungsrat Professor Dr. B. Händecke of Königsberg has kept before him in his article entitled, "*Franco-tireurs and Art in Belgium.*"<sup>1</sup>

"A certain astonishment," writes this author, "is mixed with the anger provoked by the furious misdeeds of the Belgians among all those who know the national art of the people, whether Flemish or Walloon.

"We are of opinion—and not without reason—that art is the most intense and most delicate expression of the inner life of a people. It appears at first sight that one cannot discover in the plastic art of the Belgians any manifestation corresponding to the perfidious and cruel acts of which our soldiers and fellow-citizens have been the victims. But if we look more attentively, different traits appear to us which we are able to bring into relation with this furious, insensate, and bestial attitude.

"We should in the first place note that the point of departure of all these abominable ac-

<sup>1</sup> *Nationale Rundschau*, No. 1, 1914–1915.

tions is, ultimately, the perversion of a virtue. It is a completely misguided love for the fatherland and the wish to deliver it at any cost from the enemy. The people apply the principle that the end justifies the means; they are governed and instructed in an intellectual horizon of the narrowest kind by ultramontanes taught by Rome; they see in each German the heretic whom it is necessary to exterminate. These words, 'God will know his own,' have been pronounced for a long time by the thin and hard lips of priests."

Professor Händecke then defines the characteristics of Belgian art in the fifteenth century: it was the epoch of inventions and discoveries; the spirit of the people was sane and mastered the tendency towards excesses.

He proceeds:

"But when this violent tension of intellectual forces relaxed and the sentiments up to that time controlled began to find expression, then, to our great astonishment, there appeared among these exponents of well-balanced mentality, these strong-minded inventors, these brave painters of the life

of their time, a savagery which was turned, with blind fury, against works of art.

"On August 18, 1566, the horrible excesses of the iconoclasts were let loose at Antwerp where the population of the port more particularly raged in an unheard-of fashion against all which had been considered sacred for centuries.

"From Antwerp the movement was propagated throughout Belgium and I do not forget, naturally, in this connection that similar excesses also occurred in German countries, though not with this wild hatred."

Passing next to the art of the seventeenth century, Professor Händecke recalls the terms in which a Flemish scientist, Max Rooses, speaks of the work of Brouwer:

"The personages are beings of marked ugliness; they are like monkeys in rags and with swollen faces . . . the people are sombre, dull, degraded, and only cast off their vegetative state to howl and comport themselves like the possessed and the epileptic: a pack of rascals."

"Rubens is the society painter, Jordaens that of the lower middle class, and Brouwer

the interpreter of the peasants, while David Teniers, in his phantasmagoria, is the interpreter of fantastic Belgium generally. One may find in the works of this painter a true image of the extravagant acts which the Belgians are now committing."

The author then passes to contemporary art; he notes the characteristic fashion in which Félicien Rops has interpreted "the brutally sensual manner, the power of fantastic and extravagant representation of this people."

"These few words," he says by way of conclusion, "may suffice. I have intentionally invoked only the most prominent artists, for they alone—such is the power of genius—search out and place before the world of to-day and to-morrow the hidden fibres of the moral and intellectual life of the people. These masters are the true interpreters, and therefore worthy of confidence, of all the motives which inspire the heart and soul of the people; they have also put into our hands, in the present instance, a confirmation of the misdeeds of Belgium."

Professor Händecke is not the only one who has attempted this demonstration. E. W.

Bredt has devoted a whole book adorned with fifty-four illustrations to the "Characteristics of the People" and to "Belgian Art" (Munich, Hugo Schmidt, 1915). He has applied himself, according to his preface, to explain the Flemish people and to reconcile with recorded observations the new traits which seem to be revealed in the legendary stories about the popular fury in Belgium.

"At Liège and Namur, at Charleroi and Louvain, near Malines and Antwerp, as everywhere on Belgian territory, our intrepid warriors, incomparably brave and fighting loyally, have had experience of the indescribably furious and savage conduct, the diabolic cruelty, of the Belgian masses; they have learnt how many distinct individuals have shown themselves fanatics of frightfulness and inventors of the most unimaginable duplicity.

"One can figure to oneself nothing more terrible than the fighting in the streets of Charleroi<sup>1</sup> as well as in the Belgian towns. Miserable scoundrels who fire from windows, from the ventilators of cellars, from roofs, and from the shelter of rubbish-heaps have

<sup>1</sup> No authentic German evidence alludes to fighting in the streets of Charleroi in which the population took part.

transformed the streets into a hell, where the blood of German heroes and Belgian rascals has poured forth in a stream to the imperishable glory of the brave and the ineffaceable shame of the sons of those whom Tacitus [*sic*] long ago called the most courageous of all the German people.

“It is true that any one who knows even a little of the history of this people and this country has not been surprised by this savage and frightful rage, which we prefer to impute to the populace rather than to the people itself.

“At all times, in all the centuries, Belgium has been the theatre of the most terrible combats. Now French, now German, now Spanish, now Dutch, this country has been frequently despoiled, reduced, destroyed, by elements even of its own population, in the course of wars of political liberation, religious or economic, following on epochs of flourishing and creative prosperity. This series of terrible adventures of which the memory persists in the legends, songs, and pictures of Flanders, has produced a school of uncertain and suspicious patriotism in which the individual fights single-handed rather than as a soldier belonging to a disciplined army, strong and fighting loyally.



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"These recollections are indispensable to the explanations of the explosions of anger displayed by the Belgian people, as well as for the comprehension of Flemish art, autonomous, essentially independent, grand, strong, incomparable, which has at all times been able to grow again with a new grandeur from the most profound and bloody depths.

"That which De Coster recounts in his immortal *Uilenspiegel*, Hoogenberg in his atlas of historical events, Coppens in his *Témoignages de la barbarie Gauloise*, explains how the popular flame smoulders, always ready to provoke a conflagration against a supposed aggressor."

The author endeavours to demonstrate this popular flame in the most illustrious artistic manifestations of Belgian genius. "This genius," he says, "is at once humorous and satirical, cruel and melancholy, voluptuous and hyper-sensual, anguished and lively, fantastic and busy." Belgian artists are realists who do not recoil before any horror or any ugliness. Bredt devotes a whole chapter to the taste for cruelties which he attributes to them and to the special gift with which they render them.

"Rubens," he observes, "has painted the most horrible things with the same pleasure and the same enjoyment of colour as when dealing with a fast day or a fleshy and voluptuous feast."

He submits to a special study this master's *Last Judgment*, Memling's *Hell*, and that of Jerome Bosch, the painter *par excellence* of the infernal. He represents the grand talents of these men as gratified by the spectacle of the horrible.

"Moreover," he observes, "if their natural inclination had not spontaneously oriented them towards these scenes . . . the text of their contemporaries would have imposed this attitude upon them in spite of themselves."

As proof the author offers the numerous pictures representing tortured saints prepared for churches, corporations, and shrievalties. He speaks finally of Wiertz, whose art, he says, "is only a caricature of Flemish genius, like this Belgian populace which our warriors have learnt to know." These theories will not surprise

those whom German science has accustomed to a meticulous method. They supply an example of the mistakes which, even in scientific circles, the obsession of *francs-tireurs* may lead to.

It is striking to observe how arbitrarily they falsify the characteristics of a whole art. They select some exceptional individuals like Jerome Bosch, Brouwer, Wiertz, and Rops, and isolating them from the many more eminent painters of peaceful activities and calm interiors quote them as representative of Flemish Schools, or, by an equally misleading method, they endeavour to bring into relief, in the works of the great painters, in the enormous production of Rubens, some secondary canvases to which they attribute special importance. Thus they retain, as essentially significant, the pictures representing the martyrdom of saints in which, entirely ignoring all dramatic effects, the school of Rubens saw only a magnificent pomp and a display of rich colour. The frequency of these subjects depends only on the manifestation of the religious spirit of the epoch, yet it is taken as a proof of the liking of these painters and their contemporaries for the horrible.

Did not Albert Dürer, a century before, regard as the essential mission of the art of painting the representation of the sufferings of Christ? Shall one say that his *Grande Passion* proves that he enjoyed the evocation of the idea of torture and agony?

But what is it not possible to demonstrate with the assistance of personalities and works cleverly chosen to that end? To what conclusions condemnatory of the German temperament might we not be led by the extravagant and violent imaginations of Hans Baldung Grien, for example? And what could not one deduce from the celebrated reredos of Issenheim where Mathias Grünewald, whom Germany glorifies as its greatest colourist, has painted with implacable and horrible naturalism a livid Christ, "the body marked with drops of blood and torn by thorns and prickles," the hands convulsively clenched, the feet "nailed one upon the other," and constituting only "a formless mass of putrid and swollen flesh"?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. André Michel, *Histoire de l'art depuis les premiers temps chrétiens jusqu'à nos jours*, vol. v., p. 75, Paris, Colin, 1912.

It would be superfluous to refute at greater length the thesis of the two German authors. The task would be easy but unimportant. What concerns us is the procedure of those who sustain this thesis and their mental attitude towards the stories of *francs-tireurs*. As regards this what do we find? Men whose rôle it is to examine with minute care the data from which they reason accept these as facts supported by evidence. Their critical faculty vanishes at the sight of them; they accept them without question; they regard the "perfidious and cruel" actions, the "furious, insensate, and bestial" attitude of the Belgians as something which may be taken for granted. They employ no precautions in accepting propositions of which the works of so many eminent German psychologists have established the untrustworthiness and the subjective character.

There and then, consequently, they decide on their representation of the Belgian. For history teaches that hitherto this people had certain virtues: thus it has originated magnificent schools of art. That it should be at one and the same time capable of these high mani-

festations of intelligence and dominated by savage instincts seems at first contradictory and puzzling, but far from seeing in this fact a reason for doubting the reality of the instincts attributed to the Belgians, or, at any rate, for submitting it to criticism, the Germans have proceeded in the opposite direction and have applied themselves to the adaptation of previously known facts to new ones so as to establish a concordance between them. This operation, the result of a new mental attitude towards legendary stories, is the fruit of argument.

Professor Händecke has devoted himself to this in the study of which we have given the substance. He does it by accepting *a priori* the principle that the "abominable acts" of the Belgians have their inception in the perversion of a virtue.

If this is admitted all contradiction disappears; the excesses of popular fury are reconciled with the qualities which the Belgians have displayed in the past. They are derived from an abnormal patriotism, and this abnormality in its turn gives rise to a blind fanaticism

which accepts all means as justifiable. They are produced each time that an impulse, tending to disorder, interferes with the inclination towards the good; they result in some way from a disturbance of the equilibrium between two contradictory forces of which history records a famous example, the excesses of iconoclasts. These, it is true, have occurred outside Belgium also, but in that country they assumed a special intensity.

For the rest, Art translates faithfully the characteristics of the people among whom it flourishes. Belgian art betrays clearly—we have seen the instances quoted—this latent frenzy.

Bredt proceeds in a similar way although his conclusion is less clearly affirmed. He deals with the same problem and solves it by invoking the same "impulsive, uncertain, and questionable patriotism." He searches for the origin and finds it in the impression left in the course of a tumultuous history by the ravages of successive wars.

He discerns the perverse principles of it, no less clearly, in the art of the Flemish painters

and in the taste for the horrible which he attributes to them.

Confirmed in the course of their transmission by the attestations of a growing authority, the stories about the popular fury in Belgium have thus finally penetrated into scientific circles and have been approved there yet once more.

The facts they relate have there been considered, *a priori*, as established without demur; reason has accepted them and has determined the principles and the causes of them; she has found the basis of them in the characteristics which she has attributed to the nationality and the temperament of the Belgians; she has accommodated to them the data of history so as to produce a concordance between them and has found in the result a new confirmation; in a word, she has made of them a theory.

These facts have been progressively incorporated in the German conception of Belgian nationality. In being so treated they have reacted upon the earlier versions, effacing certain elements and giving prominence to others, and have so created a new equilibrium in which they will henceforth remain as factors.



## CHAPTER V

### CHARACTER OF THE LEGENDS AND UNITY OF THEIR CYCLE

Determination of the imaginary character of the stories—  
Bearing of the *Informations Pax*, and of the enquiries  
by the military authority—Study of the genesis and of  
the transmission of the stories—Entrance into general  
belief—Unity resulting from the personages and the  
episodes—Central theme and thematic motives—Bear-  
ing of the legendary character of the stories as regards the  
Belgian people and as regards the *White Book* of the 10th  
May, 1915.

Now that we have followed the accounts  
of popular fury in Belgium from their genesis  
up to the last phase of their assimilation into  
popular belief, the time has come to throw a  
glance backwards. If, looking at them as a  
whole, one tries to disengage common traits,  
one recognizes in them all the distinctive char-  
acters of legend. As regards all these stories,  
indeed, the concordant enquiries have shown

that the episodes are directly in contradiction with the truth of the facts established.

What are these enquiries?

Those of the Commission instituted by the Belgian Government,<sup>1</sup> or those of the Commission instituted by the British Government and presided over by Lord Bryce.<sup>2</sup>

Those of neutral persons such as Mr. L.-H. Grondijs, professor at the technical institute at Dordrecht (Holland),<sup>3</sup> or of R. P. Manuel Gamarra, Paraguayan priest, student in the University of Louvain.<sup>4</sup>

There are diocesan enquiries of which the *Tijd*, the Dutch Catholic journal of pro-German tendencies, has published the principal results (Numbers 20594, April 12, 1915, and 20737, September 4, 1915), and which have refuted

<sup>1</sup> *Rapports sur la violation du droit des gens en Belgique. Commission officielle du gouvernement belge* (Paris et Nancy, Berger-Levrault, 1915).

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages, Presented to the Parliament by Command of His Majesty* (London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1915).

<sup>3</sup> L.-H. Grondijs, *Les Allemands en Belgique, Louvain et Aerschot. Notes d'un témoin hollandais* (Paris and Nancy, Berger-Levrault, 1915).

<sup>4</sup> See *Argentina*, March 4, 1915, *Courrier de la Plata*, March 4, 1915, *Cahiers Documentaires*, livraisons 24 and 25.

the accusations of hostile acts in each of sixteen cases in which the German authority had maintained charges against members of the Belgian clergy.

There are the solemn attestations of his Eminence Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines and Primate of Belgium, in his pastoral letter of Christmas, 1914, entitled "Patriotism and Endurance," and the protest of Monsignor Heylen, Bishop of Namur, against the official memoir of the Prussian Ministry of War, January 22, 1915, in which he declares: "We affirm with all the inhabitants of our villages, without exception, and with the entire Belgian people that the history of the Belgian *francs-tireurs* is a legend, an invention, a calumny."<sup>1</sup> There is the enquiry undertaken, with the support of his Eminence Cardinal Piffel of Vienna, and his Eminence Cardinal von Hartmann of Cologne, by the Wiener Priesterverein, a Vienna association of priests, which, entrusted to the Reverend Van den Bergh, member of the association,

<sup>1</sup> "Réponse pour le diocèse de Namur (provinces de Namur et Luxembourg) à la note du 22 janvier 1915, transmise par le Ministre de la Guerre de Prusse au Chancelier von Bethmann-Hollweg" (see *Cahiers Documentaires*, livraisons 25 et 26).

denies in decisive terms the existence of a war of *francs-tireurs* in Belgium.<sup>1</sup>

The present study has, however, deliberately ignored these sources of information. Wishing to find support solely in documents which are beyond criticism, it has employed only German enquiries of which almost all have emanated from the Prussian military authority.

And yet these were the judges bound by direct interest not to dissipate the legend but rather

<sup>1</sup> See *De Tijd*, Nos. 20726 of August 24, and 20727 of August 25, 1915. An Austrian denial (note of the Austro-Hungarian Legation at The Hague, published in the Dutch press on September 1, 1915), and a German one (*Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 12, 1915, 2d edition), have endeavoured to dispute the existence of the enquiry conducted by the Rev. A. Van den Bergh. These contradictions, which are expressed in general and equivocal terms, are ineffective in the face of the confirmation recently supplied by Dutch newspapers. "In order to remove all doubt as to the mission of this Austrian priest in Belgium," writes *De Tijd* (No. 20735, September 3, 1915), "we need only add that we have personal knowledge of his credentials and of his introduction to his Eminence Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines, with whom he had many conversations." "The Austrian priest, as we can testify," declares *De Maasbode* (No. 13390, September 4, 1915), "has collected the written depositions of witnesses and has not only submitted them to the Priesterverein and to Cardinal Piffel, but has also sent a copy to Cardinal von Hartmann, Archbishop of Cologne" (see *Cahiers Documentaires*, livraison 35).

to support it. For evident reasons their denials are of an extreme brevity; conceived in carefully measured terms, they concede as regards the inaccuracy of the alleged facts only the strictest minimum.

They were not in any way the result of the initiative of the military authority, but of enquiries undertaken at the formal request of the Catholic association *Pax*, and in the interests of the internal peace of the Empire, threatened by grave religious dissensions. Moreover, this association *Pax* is particularly concerned with the stories which attribute reprehensible acts to priests. It has indeed tried to restrict the application of the denials.

The *Informations Pax*, says in effect a communication of this organization published by the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, No. 165, February 25, 1915, are not in any way concerned with the attitude of the civil population which, according to the reports of German troops, carried on a war of *francs-tireurs*. These facts are indeed not related to their mission. To enquire what was the conduct of the Belgian

and French clergy is the task which *Informations Pax* have assigned themselves.

This declaration thus endeavours to dissociate the case of the priests from that of the civilians. A brief examination will make apparent the absolutely artificial character of this distinction.

Doubtless it is true that the denials of the military authority concern in particular the actions attributed to the clergy and accord to them a special importance, but this depends, on the one hand, on the exclusive interest of the association *Pax* in so much of the truth as is useful to the religious interest of the German Catholics; on the other hand, on the preponderating rôle which the legends attribute to the priests. These were, indeed, according to the stories, the leaders and instigators of the popular attempts; it was they who employed the authority of religion, who exploited the fanaticism of the masses. It is natural then that, as regards the motive of incitement to fighting, they appear alone in the denials, although occasionally a burgomaster figures alongside them. But that which concerns the other thematic motives is a different matter; the

action is accomplished by the priests and the civilians in common. How then can a denial applied to the action itself affect the one without affecting the other? What is attacked is the authority of the story, which remains common to both.

A wounded officer whose adventures are published by the *Schlesischer Zeitung* recounts that a military telephonist surprised in a cellar a burgomaster and the curé of a locality, while by means of a subterranean telephone they communicated to the enemy the German positions. The Ministry of War declares that the enquiry has not confirmed the facts advanced (see p. 26). Is it not evident that the legendary character of the action is established by this as much in the case of the civilian as of the priest?

The same is true of the motive of treacherous attacks. A Hessian teacher tells in a letter reproduced by the *Hessische Zeitung* of an ambush prepared for his detachment in the village of Ch . . . . "The door of the church," he writes, "opened suddenly, the curé rushed out at the head of a number of scoundrels armed

with revolvers." Here again the Ministry of War informs us that the enquiry has not confirmed the reported facts. How can this statement show the legendary character of the story in so far as it concerns the priest without at the same time exculpating those who co-operated with him?

It is the same with the characteristic episode of the machine-guns placed on the belfries, to which the military bureau of enquiry has opposed such formal contradictions.

There remains the motive of the murders, the poisonings, and the mutilations. By far the most numerous tales are attached to this. The cleric here only plays an occasional part, if he has not entirely disappeared. It is the women and children who appear here in the foreground. These are the hyenas of the field of battle, who tear out the eyes of the wounded, slicing their ears and their noses, and cutting their fingers to take possession of their rings. But are there any episodes of which irrefutable evidence has more emphatically demonstrated the entirely legendary character?

The distinction that the association *Pax*



seeks to introduce appears then completely arbitrary; nothing justifies it. The details given to the tales of the popular fury in Belgium are identical, whether they are concerned with priests or civilians; they ruin entirely, and for the same reason, the credit of one as that of the other.

Moreover, even supposing that these enquiries failed, or that they could not be made use of, the study of the genesis and of the diffusion of the tales is none the less sufficient, by itself alone, to demonstrate their imaginary character.

The German army which invaded Belgium supplied, in fact, the whole of the conditions which, in accordance with established laws, bring about the greatest number of distortions in the relation of observed facts.

In every army mobilization brutally tears the soldier away from his accustomed mode of life, and plunges him into a chaos of tumultuous and extraordinary events. Exposed to the surprises of the enemy, submitted to shocks of combats, his mind suffers the most violent excitements; it is in a manner overthrown, and only a weakened perception controls the facts.

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These circumstances are general and common to all wars. There are in addition others which are characteristic of the German army of invasion in Belgium. This army did not expect, in penetrating into Belgian territory, to meet there an armed resistance. Moreover, the Belgian staff had deliberately adopted a stragem consisting of harassing the invader without truce. Some isolated detachments, mobile and elusive, were dispatched far outside the lines; dispersed about the country, their mission was to retard the advance of the enemy by opposing him with guerilla warfare, to disturb his columns, and to menace his communications.

Again, the preconceived ideas which dominated the mind of the German soldier, and which resulted from his environment, oriented in a particular way the distortion which facts received at his hands. The memory of the French *francs-tireurs* of 1870 had remained deep-rooted in Germany; the army was still entirely impregnated with it; it had extracted therefrom a lesson and a doctrine for military operations in an enemy country. Trained during peace time according to these principles,

the soldiers were necessarily dominated by the apprehension of *francs-tireurs*. Their imaginations anticipated the attacks.

Moreover, outside military education a whole popular literature had contributed to keep up the memory of the last campaign. Certain novels devoted to the war of the future had even applied it in advance to the future conquest of Belgium. Thus the soldier unconsciously transposed into reality these subjective impressions which haunted his mind, wherein were already united all the constitutive elements of legend.

Other predispositions acted in a similar manner upon the main body of the German army of invasion. The first rumours of treacherous attacks were not long in getting disseminated in Germany. A double official confirmation had given them a vast celebrity and concentrated upon them general attention. The foolish tales circulated everywhere and were the subject of all conversations.

The German residents expelled from Belgium at the declaration of war had, on their part, reported stories of horrors. They had told of

monstrous crimes committed by a furious population upon defenceless foreigners. The press had published this delirium of refugees, but had said nothing of the exasperation which gave rise to it. Thus was awakened in Germany a violent hatred against the Belgians, and an ardent desire for revenge. The armies which spread themselves over Belgium had been mobilized in this atmosphere of feverish excitement. At the moment of crossing the frontier, they were deeply intoxicated by it. All their thoughts were contaminated and inclined by a natural bent towards an attitude hostile to the Belgians.

The psychology of the German soldier at the beginning of the invasion thus produced a collection of conditions which inevitably engendered some legendary elaborations. Further, this was not confined to the imagination of each individual, but on the contrary convergent predispositions common to the mass oriented them in a definite sense.

The birth in the German army of the tales of the popular fury in Belgium was then inevitable; it appeared there as, in a sense, a necessary phenomenon, dictated by laws.

But it is not alone the considerations derived from this determinism which demonstrate the legendary character of these tales. Some precise observations afford a direct proof by allowing one to reconstruct with clearness the principal phases of their genesis.

These observations show the tendency of the mind to connect every chance circumstance with the idea of the danger upon which it concentrates attention; they show the confusions and the erroneous interpretations which result; they show this fixed tendency acting on the nervous system, and provoking in the soldier an immediate reflex identical in all cases; they show the influence which the all-powerful suggestion of the *franc-tireur* exercises, and the common orientation which this impresses upon the imagined explanations of incidents with unknown causes; they show, finally, the progressive constitution of a legendary amplification, by the addition of successive elements.

Other observations enable one to follow the story along the road upon which it travels during its transmission. They make apparent the part played by soldiers returned from the

front: the curiosity that they raise, the prestige which the wounded enjoy, the authority of their word, the questions with which they are pressed and which suggest the expected response.

They throw light upon how the legends told in letters from the front, reproduced without control and multiplied by the press, pass into books, into the chronicles of the war, into the anecdotal stories, and into the popular literature and theatres. They account for their representation in the pictures on book covers, or on the post-cards displayed in the shop-windows.

Finally, a collection of characteristic documents shows how these legends, successively upheld by the highest authorities of the State, are accredited in public opinion. The Emperor himself has solemnly attested their veracity. To believe them has almost become an obligation imposed upon the good citizen. They have, in this manner, penetrated into the most remote regions of the country, and into the most obscure social strata. They have become one of the customary subjects of conversation.

There is evidence that the popular mind has completely assimilated them, and holds them henceforth as established.

Studies, of an objective turn, reveal that they have even imposed themselves upon scientific circles. The events related in the tales have there been received without criticism, as the equal of demonstrated truths. They have reacted upon the previously acknowledged facts and have taken their place. They are incorporated logically in the mind. They are, in a word, deeply rooted in the common belief. Thus the study of the genesis and transmission of these tales suffices, in itself alone, to establish their imaginary character.

Therefore, if one understands by legends localized and individualized tales which, while differing from historical truth, are nevertheless objects of collective belief, the tales relating to the manifestations of a veritable popular fury in Belgium against the invaders are, in the full sense of the word, legends.

Considered in the mass they possess an incontestable unity. This results not only from the legendary character which is common to

them all, but, at the same time, from the people whom they present, and the episodes attributed to them.

These people are, on the one hand, the soldiers belonging to the German army of invasion; on the other, Belgians living in the country and the towns, middle-class citizens and workmen, as well as peasants; women and young girls as well as men; old people and children as well as adults. The priests, finally, have played in it a predominant rôle. The episodes in which these people are concerned, although different in their details, can all be brought within a small number of clearly defined motives, among which they are divided: those of the acts of treason, of the incitement to combat, of the treacherous attacks, of the machine-guns on the belfries, of the murders, poisonings, and mutilations.

These motives, themselves closely connected, attach themselves to a central idea. They tend to represent, as a whole, a Belgian population fanaticized by the priests, blinded by a veritable patriotic madness, opposing itself by every means to the invader, throwing itself



against him with the excesses of a sanguinary and perfidious instinct.

This idea is the fundamental theme which dominates them all in their diversity, and which confers upon them the unity of one and the same cycle.

\* \* \*

That all the tales analysed in the course of these pages are derived from the same legendary cycle is a fact of which the importance exceeds the study, properly called, of the genesis and propagation of the legends.

These tales have not for object episodes which are indifferent, or which belong to a remote past; they concern the immediate honour of a whole people.

This people they paint under aspects sometimes foolishly heroic, most often, on the contrary, deeply odious. On the one hand, they show it, a mere handful, struggling against a redoubtable invader, coping with him during some days with derisory arms, and pursuing the conflict into the flames of its burning dwellings. On the other hand, they represent it

basely attacking troops when it had succeeded in gaining their confidence; striking meanly in the back from behind houses and hedges; assassinating officers and soldiers when isolated, or in their sleep. And they represent also the cleric fanaticizing those whom he has a mission to instruct and setting them an example of crime.

They attribute, finally, to the children, old people, and women, monstrous cruelties. The conclusions to which we have brought this study not only establish the legendary nature of all the tales, they at the same time discredit, in the most direct fashion, the authority of an official document which aspires to charge the Belgian population with the same offences.

In a *White Book* dated May 10, 1915,<sup>1</sup> the German Government, indeed, has denounced the infringement of the rights of the people by the Belgians, in the popular war that they opposed to the armies of the invader.

The *White Book* bases this accusation upon evidence collected by the German military

<sup>1</sup> *Die Völkerrechtswidrige Führung des belgischen Volkskriegs. Auswärtiges amt.* Berlin, Verlag von Georg Stilke, 1915.

authority itself, and of which it publishes a selection (*eine Auslese*).

Now what does this evidence amount to? It reproduces with a striking fidelity the thematic motives so characteristically brought into relief in the course of the present study. One finds again there the acts of treason, the incitement to murder and combat, the treacherous attacks, and the attempts at poisoning, the eyes torn out, and the various mutilations.

As an example, here is taken by chance, from amongst many other similar ones, the official report of one of these depositions.

#### ANNEX 58

"Jurisdiction of Headquarters. No. 1 Magdeburg, 1st November, 1914.

"Present: The military assistant judge Dr. Pauls, in position of judge. Military registrar Glasdrow.

"Hearing before the military jurisdiction of the reservist Ernst Baldeweg of the Infantry Regiment No. 35.

"At the request of the Commandant-General

of the 4th Army Corps, the reservist Ernst Balde-  
weg, employed at a milk shop in Berlin, Rathe-  
nower Strasse 37, of the 11th Company of the  
35th Infantry Regiment, aged 28 years, belong-  
ing to the German Reformed Church, after  
reminder of the sacred character of the oath,  
has been heard as follows:

‘About the 8th August, 1914, I was  
personally able to verify, in a village before  
Verviers, that in one stable somebody had  
cut the tongue of a horse, in another stable,  
of four horses. In the first case, I saw that  
the tongue was not entirely cut away, but  
that it hung out of the mouth by a thread.  
In my opinion, it was the civilian Belgians  
who had mutilated the horses in such a  
manner so that they could not be taken  
away by the Germans.

‘On Sunday, the 9th, or Monday, the 10th,  
of August, 1914, I saw in a locality near  
Herve, a German hussar who was bound  
hand and foot to a tree. Two long nails had  
been driven through the eyes in such a manner  
that he was fixed to the tree by them. The  
hussar no longer lived. In the same locality,  
near a hedge in front of a farm, a foot soldier  
of the 52d Infantry Regiment was lying,

whose ears, nose, and fingers had been cut off, and the belly opened so that the intestines protruded. The dead man had also on his breast traces of blows so that it was completely covered with cuts. For each of these cruelties only civilian Belgians could have been responsible.

'I declare again that I have only given an account of my personal observations, and that I have abstained from all exaggeration.

'Read, approved, and signed,  
'(s) ERNST BALDEWEG.'

'The witness has taken the oath.

'(s) Dr. PAULS. (s) GLASDROW.'"

This example speaks for itself. One recognizes here at once the same type of the legendary tales of which we have reproduced such numerous specimens. Let it be compared with the enquiries, emanating also from a German source, which have established the emptiness of the torn-out eyes motive (see pp. 99-113). In no hospital could one find wounded, who had lost their sight as a result of criminal outrages committed by Belgian civilians. Moreover, although the *White Book* reproduces the frightful tales of soldiers, it does not support them with

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any attestations of doctors. And this fact is significant, for these were clearly indicated and were alone competent to supply evidence worthy of credit in regard to such a matter.

Each page of the *White Book* testifies thus to some legendary infiltrations against which its authors could not guard it. Can one be astonished?

The date alone of the deposition of the milk-shop employee Baldeweg is, by itself, a significant indication. The deeds alleged would have been committed between the 8th and 10th August, 1914, the evidence was heard on the 1st November, 1914, eighty-three days after.

Now, according to experience, as we have seen, psychologists have demonstrated secondary distortion in accounts of incidents forty-eight seconds after their occurrence. What may it be after eighty-three days during which, while the memory of the events fades, the development of the legends proceeds?

The example furnished by this deposition does not represent an exceptional case, rather the contrary. From a statement reproduced in the annex, it appears that out of two hundred

and ten witnessed acts mentioned in the *White Book*, the interval between the alleged date of the event and the date of the deposition is:

For 3 witnesses less than 20 days.					
" 46	"	between	20 and	50 days.	
" 48	"	"	50	" 100	"
" 48	"	"	100	" 150	"
" 53	"	"	150	" 200	"
" 12	"	"	200	" 250	"

This may be regarded, perhaps, as only a theoretical consideration. It is, however, more. Who are the witnesses heard by the German military enquirers? All, with two exceptions perhaps, belonged to this army of invasion, where legend is born, where it develops, and whence it is propagated.

How, in these circumstances, can their depositions fail to carry an echo of it? And do they not render suspect the conclusions of a report which rests upon their authority alone?

We hold to these facts and to this verification. It is not our intention either to argue or to demand, still less to pronounce a decision. We have only endeavoured to make clear the

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events in the light of collective psychology, and in accordance with a sane scientific discipline. We do not go beyond this. For the rest, each is the judge in his own conscience.



## APPENDIX

### TABLE OF THE EVIDENCE QUOTED IN THE "WHITE BOOK" OF MAY 10, 1915

THE German *White Book*, of May 10, 1915, dealing with "the Offences against the Law of Nations Committed in the Belgian Civilian Warfare," includes a general memoir by the Imperial Department for Foreign Affairs and four particular reports, emanating from the Military Bureau of Enquiry into the Violations of the Laws of War, dealing respectively with Aerschot (A), Andenne (B), Dinant (C), Louvain (D). The general memoir has 66 appendices; the reports on Aerschot, Andenne, Dinant, and Louvain have respectively 5, 4, 87, and 50 of them, making a total of 212.

To these 212 appendices there correspond a number almost equivalent of depositions; each appendix consists as a rule of the official record of the evidence of a single witness.

The table following, the results of which were summarized on p. 313, gives in each case an indication of: (1) the number of the appendix in question, (2) the alleged date of the event referred to, (3) the date of the deposition, and (4) the number of days between (2) and (3).

Exceptionally, some appendices contain the testimony of several witnesses. Where this is the case the number is indicated in parentheses in the first column. In twelve instances there are military reports which have not the characters of evidence, while in twenty-four others the depositions are not dated or refer to events of which the dates are not given; no notice has been taken of these.

Some of the testimony concerns several events which occurred at different dates. In this case the most recent date has been noted. The first appendix consists of a map of Belgium, the last is a plan of Louvain.

No. of the Deposition 1	Alleged Date of the Events 2	Date of the Deposition 3	Interval between Dates 2 and 3 4
Appendix 3	5 Aug.	29 Sept.	55 days
" 4	6 "	23 Nov.	109 "
" 5	16 "	17 Aug.	1 "
" 6	7 "	20 Nov.	106 "
" 8 (5)	7 "	12 "	97 "
" 9	14 "	25 "	103 "
" 13	5 "	8 Oct.	64 "
" 14	20 "	3 "	44 "
" 15	23 "	3 "	44 "
" 17	20 "	7 "	48 "
" 18 (3)	22 "	2 "	41 "
" 19	23 "	5 "	43 "
" 20	25 "	4 "	43 "
" 21	25 "	25 Sept.	34 "
" 22	22 "	23 "	32 "
" 23	22 "	25 "	34 "
" 25	23 "	23 "	31 "
" 26	22 "	25 "	34 "
" 27	22 "	24 "	33 "
" 28 (3)	22 "	25 "	34 "
" 29	23 "	13 Oct.	51 "
" 30	24 "	15 "	32 "
" 31	24 "	24 Sept.	31 "
" 32	23 "	2 Oct.	40 "
" 35	23 "	1 "	70 "
" 36	22 "	5 "	43 "
" 37 (2)	23 "	5 "	42 "
" 45 (2)	22 "	3 "	42 "
" 46 (3)	22 "	9 "	48 "
" 48	24 "	12 Nov.	80 "
" 49	25 "	18 Sept.	24 "
" 48	24 "	20 Nov.	88 "
" 48	22 "	22 "	92 "
" 48	18 "	25 Sept.	38 "
" 48	mid-Aug. (15)	17 Nov.	94 "
" 49	20 Oct.	17 "	28 "
" 49	20 "	17 "	28 "
" 49	18 "	17 "	30 "
" 49	19 "	17 "	29 "

No. of the Deposition	Alleged Date of the Events	Date of the Deposition	Interval be- tween Dates 2 and 3
1	2	3	4
Appendix 50	25 Oct.	31 Oct.	6 days
" 51	20 Aug.	14 Dec.	116 "
" 52	19 "	14 "	115 "
" 54	24 "	27 Aug.	3 "
" 55	mid-Aug. (15)	31 Oct.	46 "
" 58	7 Aug.	11 Nov.	96 "
" 59	5 "	11 "	98 "
" 60	5 "	11 "	98 "
" 61	10 "	1 "	83 "
" 63	6 "	21 "	107 "
" 64	6 "	27 "	103 "
" 65	24 "	15 Oct.	52 "
" 66	23 "	31 "	69 "
A. " 1 (2)	mid-Aug. (15)	10 Nov.	87 "
" 2	end Aug. (31)	31 Oct.	61 "
" 3	27 Aug.	24 Nov.	89 "
" 4	19 "	6 "	79 "
" 5	19 "	3 "	76 "
" 6	19 "	15 "	88 "
" 7	19 "	29 "	102 "
B. " 1	19 "	12 Jan.	134 "
" 2	20 "	21 "	154 "
" 3	20 "	21 Nov.	93 "
" 4 (11)	20 "	5 Dec.	107 "
C. " 4	20 "	5 Jan.	138 "
" 5	23 "	6 Nov.	75 "
" 6	23 "	20 Feb.	181 "
" 7	23 "	6 Jan.	136 "
" 8	23 "	9 "	139 "
" 9	23 "	8 "	138 "
" 10	23 "	16 Feb.	177 "
" 11	23 "	3 "	164 "
" 13	23 "	5 "	166 "
" 14 (2)	23 "	5 "	166 "
" 15	23 "	5 "	166 "
" 16	23 "	28 "	189 "
" 17	23 "	9 Dec.	108 "
" 18	23 "	9 "	108 "
" 24	23 "	3 Mar.	192 "

No. of the Deposition	Alleged Date of the Events	Date of the Deposition	Interval be- tween Dates 2 and 3
1	2	3	4
Appendix 25	23 Aug.	14 Feb.	175 days
" 26	23 "	3 Mar.	192 "
" 27	23 "	14 Feb.	175 "
" 28	23 "	3 Mar.	192 "
" 29	23 "	15 Feb.	176 "
" 30	23 "	19 "	180 "
" 31	23 "	15 "	176 "
" 32	23 "	14 "	175 "
" 33	23 "	17 Dec.	116 "
" 34	23 "	11 Jan.	141 "
" 35	23 "	16 Dec.	115 "
" 36	23 "	17 Mar.	206 "
" 37	23 "	17 "	206 "
" 38	23 "	17 "	206 "
" 39	23 "	14 Feb.	175 "
" 40	23 "	12 Dec.	111 "
" 41	23 "	1 Mar.	191 "
" 42	23 "	2 "	191 "
" 43	23 "	2 "	191 "
" 44	23 "	2 "	191 "
" 45	23 "	19 Feb.	180 "
" 46	23 "	2 Mar.	191 "
" 47	23 "	2 "	191 "
" 48	23 "	23 Feb.	184 "
" 49	23 "	18 "	179 "
" 50	23 "	18 "	179 "
" 51	23 "	17 Mar.	206 "
" 52	23 "	17 "	206 "
" 53	23 "	17 "	206 "
" 54	23 "	20 Jan.	150 "
" 55	23 "	5 Feb.	166 "
" 56	23 "	31 Jan.	161 "
" 57	23 "	2 Mar.	191 "
" 58	23 "	6 "	195 "
" 59	21 "	6 "	197 "
" 60	21 "	6 "	197 "
" 61	23 "	3 "	192 "
" 62	23 "	3 "	192 "
" 63	23 "	16 Feb.	177 "

No. of the Deposition	Alleged Date of the Events	Date of the Deposition	Interval be- tween Dates 2 and 3
1	2	3	4
Appendix 65	23 Aug.	7 Mar.	196 days
" 66	23 "	25 Feb.	186 "
" 67	23 "	2 "	163 "
" 68	23 "	9 "	139 "
" 70	23 "	10 Dec.	109 "
" 71	23 "	17 "	116 "
" 72	23 "	8 "	108 "
" 73	25 "	5 "	103 "
" 75	23 "	6 Mar.	195 "
" 76	23 "	7 "	196 "
" 77	23 "	7 "	196 "
" 78	23 "	24 Feb.	185 "
" 79	23 "	17 Dec.	116 "
" 80	23 "	8 Jan.	138 "
" 81	23 "	17 Mar.	203 "
" 83	26 "	17 "	206 "
" 84	23 "	17 "	206 "
" 85	23 "	17 "	206 "
" 86	23 "	26 "	215 "
" 87	23 "	12 Jan.	142 "
D. " 1	25 "	27 Sept.	33 "
" 2	25 "	27 "	33 "
" 3	25 "	23 "	29 "
" 4	25 "	23 "	29 "
" 5	25 "	23 "	29 "
" 6	25 "	23 "	29 "
" 7	25 "	17 "	23 "
" 8	25 "	17 "	23 "
" 9	25 "	19 Nov.	86 "
" 10	25 "	23 Sept.	29 "
" 11	25 "	17 "	23 "
" 12	25 "	19 Nov.	86 "
" 13	25 "	17 Sept.	23 "
" 14	25 "	17 "	23 "
" 15	25 "	18 "	24 "
" 16	25 "	18 "	24 "
" 17	25 "	19 Nov.	86 "
		19 "	86 "
		19 "	86 "

No. of the Deposition	Alleged Date of the Events	Date of the Deposition	Interval be- tween Dates 2 and 3
1	2	3	4
Appendix 18	25 Aug.	16 Nov.	83 days
" 19	25 "	16 Dec.	113 "
" 20	25 "	16 Nov.	83 "
" 21	27 "	18 "	83 "
" 22	27 "	19 "	86 "
" 23	25 "	19 "	86 "
" 24	25 "	19 "	86 "
" 25	25 "	22 "	89 "
" 27	25 "	25 "	92 "
" 28	25 "	23 "	90 "
" 29	25 "	13 "	90 "
" 30	31 "	14 "	75 "
" 31	25 "	14 "	81 "
" 33	25 "	21 Sept.	27 "
" 34	1 Sept.	29 Nov.	89 "
" 35	26 Aug.	9 Oct.	44 "
" 36 (2)	25 "	8 Mar.	195 "
" 37	25 "	10 Jan.	138 "
" "	25 "	10 "	138 "
" "	26 "	10 "	137 "
" 38	25 "	1 Mar.	188 "
" "	26 "	19 "	205 "
" 39	25 "	1 "	188 "
" 40	25 "	1 "	188 "
" 41	25 "	3 "	190 "
" 42	1 Sept.	28 Dec.	118 "
" 43	1 "	8 Jan.	129 "
" 44	26 Aug.	4 Feb.	162 "
" 45	26 "	29 Dec.	125 "
" 46	26 "	12 Feb.	170 "
" 47	26 "	8 Jan.	135 "
" 48	25 "	18 Dec.	115 "
" 49 (2)	25 "	8 Jan.	136 "





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